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A PASTOR'S SKETCHES:

OR,

Conversations with Anxious Inquirers respecting
the Way of Salvation.

BY

I. S. SPENCER, D.D.,

PASTOR OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BROOKLYN, N.Y.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION AND EDITORIAL NOTES

BY

J. A. JAMES.



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P R E F A C E .

"This is a book of truth. These Sketches are taken from real life. They are facts, not fancies. They are the experiences of some whom the Author has known in the course of his ministry. He has not given to them an item of colouring. The only thing about them, from which any erroneous impression can possibly arise, is to be found in the fact, that they are *only* sketches, not containing all that could be given, in respect to the individuals here mentioned. But they are believed to contain a fair and sufficiently full representation of each case.

"The Author has made this selection from the materials in his possession, on the principle of avoiding useless repetitions as much as possible; and on the principle of meeting some of the strange difficulties which sometimes trouble inquirers after salvation.

"If this humble volume shall fall into the hands of any who recognize their own portrait among the sketches here drawn, the Author would affectionately suggest to them the propriety of permitting that fact to remain unknown. He solicits this as a special favour to himself; while he assures them he would deem it an injustice and a breach of confidence to disclose to other people the particular feelings of individuals, made known to him in the sacredness of religious intimacy. He has been careful not to write **anything** here, which can injure the feelings of any living person. It must be by the person's own act, not the Au-

thor's, if any one of the portraits here sketched is ever known to the public as that of any particular individual.

" The most of the instances here mentioned occurred in revivals of religion ; but the Author would be sorry to have it thought, that he has any preference for the piety commencing at such a time, before that which commences at other seasons. He would also be sorry to be at all instrumental in leading any soul to think, that salvation is not as certainly and as easily attainable at any other time, as during a revival, if the soul will as diligently seek it. It would still more grieve him, to do anything towards fostering those spurious excitements, so often called revivals, which have done so much to distract the churches and corrupt the religion of this country. He has no fear of any excitements which divine truth will produce ; and he believes, that, if the *truth* has produced them, they will be ready and willing to be *controlled* by the truth, come from what lips it may ; and will not, therefore, induce the people to rely upon some particular men, 'Revival Preachers,' as they are sometimes called. He would not undervalue revivals of religion, because abuses have sometimes crept into churches under that name ; nor would he dare to think of choosing the mode in which the Holy Spirit shall do his own blessed work.

" The particular religious experiences of individuals are not guides for other people. They are only illustrations of divine truth, by its application. The Sacred Scriptures are the only just guide. Still, religious history and religious biography, though often abused, by an over-trusting and by a misguided taste, have some signal advantages, and, fitly used, may be of peculiar benefit. It should be carefully remembered, that such biographies are written for the very reason that they are supposed to contain something uncommon ; and therefore cannot be applicable, as examples, to believers, or inquirers, in every case. Nobody would ever think of publishing the religious experience of every believer in a church or city.

"But the Author has hoped that these sketches might be useful, not on the ground of their marvellousness, so much as on the ground of their applicability, as they refer to common experiences and common difficulties, which have occurred under the ordinary ministration of a very humble individual; and are, therefore, likely to occur again. He has hoped that they might be instructive, by showing the application of divine truth to human hearts—by leading some anxious inquirers after salvation to see what it is that hinders them from peace with God—and by leading private Christians and young Ministers of the gospel to study more carefully what they shall say to those who inquire what they shall do to be saved. Twenty years ago, he would have valued a book like this, above all price. And if this, by the divine blessing, shall be of any assistance to young Ministers, on a very delicate and important part of their duty, or of any assistance to inquirers after salvation, its purpose will be accomplished.

"BROOKLYN, N. Y.

"August, 1850."

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Sketch of Dr. Spencer.

It will add to the interest of this work, if the reader is made acquainted with the history of its Author. The following brief sketch is from the funeral sermon, preached on occasion of his death, by the Rev. Dr. Spring, of New York, one of the oldest and most influential ministers of any denomination in the United States.—ED.

“The beloved man whose untimely death we all so deeply deplore, was a sufferer; but he was not guilty of the folly of ‘comparing the sufferings of this present time with the glory that shall be revealed.’ His affections were not set on the things of earth and time; nor did he allow them to come in competition with the favors of his Divine Master. The Church of God has not many such ministers of the Gospel to lose as Dr. Spencer. His brethren in the ministry have rarely, if ever, been called to mourn a heavier loss. This is an affecting scene, my hearers, to him who now addresses you, as well as to yourselves. There lies the man who I fondly hoped would live to preach my funeral sermon. Yet, though endowed with a more vigorous frame, though in the high day of unwearied toil and usefulness, and though more than half a score of years behind me, he is the first to reach the goal, and gain the prize. I have never felt more deeply than I

now do, that with all its distinguished blessings, one of the penalties of long life is, that we live to see so many others die.

“The early history of our departed brother was not unlike that of many of his brethren in the sacred calling, and not a few of eminence in other professions in our youthful land. Under God’s guidance and blessing, he was a *self-made* man. *Ichabod Smith Spencer* was born of Christian parents, in the town of Rupert, Bennington County, in the State of Vermont, February 3, 1797. His father, one of two brothers, was a respected agriculturist, that could do little more for his children than furnish them with those rudiments of education which are so well supplied by the common schools of New-England. This son was the child of many prayers, faithful and kind discipline, and assiduous religious culture. He became hopefully pious in his youth, and at an early age united himself with the church of God. At seventeen years of age he was thrown upon his own resources; and with no pecuniary assistance except that which he derived from his emoluments as a teacher, was fitted for college at the Academy in Salem, in the State of New York. Here it was his privilege to enjoy the friendship and paternal counsels of that venerable and beloved man, whose praise is in all the churches, the Rev. Alexander Proudfit, whom he never ceased to regard with filial affection. At Union College he maintained a high standing in his class, and was graduated with honor in the year 1822. He was immediately employed as a teacher in the grammar-school in Schenectady, and with his eye and heart on the pulpit, at the same time pursued his theological studies under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Yates, the Professor of Moral Philosophy in the College. He subsequently became the Preceptor of the Academy in Canandaigua, where he so far completed his theological studies, as to receive his licensure to preach the Gospel.

“Though, as he himself has often remarked, his prepara-

tions for the ministry were far from being ample; unwearied diligence, a well-disciplined mind, and a character of great decision and loveliness, soon convinced the churches that he was no common man, and prepared the way for his occupying one of the most important pulpits in New England. He was the worthy successor of Stoddard, Edwards, and Williams, and an able defender of the truths of the Gospel, at a time when so many of the churches of New England had departed from the faith of their Puritan ancestors. Long will he be remembered in Northampton; where, though his ministry was continued but three and a half years, it was attended with great success. His occasional visits to that people, after the dissolution of his pastoral charge, were hailed with every token of Christian affection on the part of the people, and greatly enjoyed by himself. He left Northampton for Brooklyn in 1832, to take the charge of this then infant and newly-organized church, where he continued in the pastoral office until his death, the 23d of November, 1854, at the age of nearly 57 years.

“It is characteristic of the best ministers that they are best at home, and most distinguished in their own pulpits. There was no ‘flourish of trumpets’ with Dr. Spencer, when he went abroad. He was not demonstrative in his nature, nor eager for the praise of men. He was emulous, but it was mainly to magnify the truths of God, and do good to the souls of men. No man was less desirous than he to ‘create a sensation,’ and set the world aghast by his preaching. Yet was he exclusively devoted to his work. His heart, his thoughts, his studies and attainments, his time, his interests, his influence, and his life, were given to the ministry. Few ministers of the everlasting Gospel, if any, are more industrious; and few have less occasion to lament misspent and wasted hours. The result was, that he became one of the best and most effective preachers of the age. Few habitually spake like him in discourses of such instructiveness, such attractive persuasion, such

withering rebuke of wickedness, or such happy effects upon the minds of men. He 'spoke the things which become sound doctrine,' and declared 'the whole counsel of God.' He was cautious and wise, but he was urgent and in earnest. He was often tender to weeping, yet was he a most fearless preacher. There was a large commingling of the 'Son of consolation' with the 'Son of thunder' in his character. I have heard him say that he *did not know what it was to be ensnared or embarrassed in preaching God's truth, and that the thought of being afraid to utter it because it was unpopular, never once entered his mind.* There was something of nature in this, and more of grace; he was fearless of men, because he feared God. There was great variety in his preaching; he was not confined to a few threadbare topics; his mind and heart took a wide range, and brought out of his treasure 'things both new and old.' Nor was he given to crude and imperfect preparations for the pulpit; a volume of sermons might be selected from his manuscripts, which would be a beautiful model for the youthful ministry, and a great comfort to the Church of God. His Sabbath evening lectures on the Shorter Catechism, as well as portions of his lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, will not easily be forgotten by those who heard them.

"In his style of writing, and in his style and manner of preaching, he was manly, strong, and energetic, rather than rhetorical. His thoughts were weighty, his imagination rich; but they were sweet thoughts, and hallowed imaginations. He had no verbiage. I know no man whose piety and taste more instinctively revolted from the ostentation of words; his words were simple and 'fitly spoken,' and his style remarkably terse and sententious. There was now and then an iron nerve about his discourses and manner, and a flash of thought, that were startling, and that broke upon his hearers like a voice of thunder. Yet with all this startling boldness, there was sweetness, humility, and meekness, and those deep and realizing

views of divine truth which indicated that he was taught of God. It was not difficult to perceive that he was no stranger to the duties of the closet. In his own pulpit, his *prayers* were distinguished, not only for their devotional spirit, but for their appropriateness and variety. Those who have heard him most, and longest, and most attentively, have remarked that they never knew anything like repetition in his prayers, and never enjoyed such variety of sacred thought and emotion as they enjoyed from his devotional exercises.

"He excelled also as a *pastor*. His parochial duties were his labour and delight. There was great faithfulness, great painstaking, and even great *tact*, in his pastoral services. The life of a pastor consists, in no small degree, in the study of personal character, and in the study and exhibition of those divine truths that are adapted to the character and experience of those committed to his charge. Dr. Spencer's 'Pastoral Sketches,' a work of great interest in itself, and great value to ministers, and to all inquiring minds, illustrates his great excellence in this department of ministerial labour. Would that we were all more like him, in marking and in treasuring up the actings of the human heart, in watching the progress of serious thought, in following the leadings of the Divine Spirit upon the minds of our people, and in addressing to them the right truth, in the right way, and at the right time! His acquaintance with the spiritual history of his people gave him prodigious advantage over their minds in his discourses from the pulpit. His portraits of character were to the life, and though they were delicately drawn, and without personal allusion, there was no escape from the grasp of truth when he put the screw upon the conscience, and made the law and the Gospel alike utter the words of Nathan to David, 'Thou art the man.' And the beauty of the process was, that he did it with a tenderness and *sympathy* that so linked the speaker with the hearers, that the stout-hearted could not complain, and the broken-

hearted were made whole. He had no theory of 'revivals,' yet was he often in the midst of them. God's truth, God's Spirit, and the prayers of his people, were the only agencies he relied on, and he found them abundantly adequate to their end. God gave him souls for his hire. This is the reward he sought after, and he enjoys it now.

"I have said more than once that he was a *sufferer*. Nor may I close without asking you to go with me to his chamber of suffering and triumph. 'It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. Beyond the banqueting-halls of the rich and the palaces of princes, is the 'chamber where the good man meets his fate.' His voice will not be soon forgotten as uttered from the pulpit; 'but being dead he yet speaketh' from that sad and triumphant chamber. He was a sufferer for years, and his sufferings sometimes oppressed his heart, because they unfitted him for active labour; yet I have seen him more depressed when the sunlight of prosperity shone upon him, than in the dark night of his affliction. His graces grew under the sharpest trials; and amid all the outward darkness with which he was so long enveloped, his path shone brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

"During the last three or four weeks of his life, so severe were his sufferings, that he was not inclined to much conversation. But on the Monday preceding his death, being comparatively free from pain, and perceiving that his time was short, he called his family about his bed, requested them to be so arranged that he could see them all, and separately addressed each one of them. He told them that he expected to die, and expected to go to heaven, and expressed the hope that he should meet them all there. In his own simple manner, and with all the tenderness of a dying man, he opened to them the way of life by Jesus Christ, spoke to them of his own confidence in the Saviour, and urged them to 'cling to Christ and the Bible' as their only hope.

"It was just after this affecting scene, that I knocked at

his door. And never was I more kindly directed than in making this fraternal visit. I had some fears, from what I knew of his self-scrutinizing spirit, that I might find him in a depressed state of mind. But as he drew near the close of his struggles, God was kind, and gave him sweet indications of his paternal love. There he tossed, day after day, and night after night, upon that couch of racking pain, with a mind as clear as Newton's, and a heart as peaceful as a child in its mother's bosom. The great peculiarity of his Christian character was his shrinking humility and self-diffidence. More than once, in the days of his unbroken vigour, I have heard him say, 'I have mistaken my calling; I never was fit for a minister of the Gospel.' No one else thought so; yet he retained this self-diffidence to the last. I said to him, 'Brother Spencer, I am afraid you are about to leave us.' He replied, 'I think so.' I took his hand, and he said, 'You see I am strong; I may rally, but it is more than probable that I shall leave you by to-morrow morning.' "Is it *peace* with you, brother?" His body was in agony; he tossed his head on the pillow, and replied, '*It is all peace!*' He paused, and, fixing his piercing eye upon me, said, 'I am afraid *it is too much peace*. I cannot discover in myself those evidences of personal godliness which justify me in enjoying *such abundant peace*.' I could not repress a smile at these sweet words, and then reminded him of those words of the Lord Jesus, when He said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly*.' He simply replied, 'Pray with me;' and then called his family around his bed, where we knelt and prayed together for the last time. His sufferings continued without any abatement, with the exception of a few tranquil hours, which he employed in giving to those around him his last counsels and charge, commending them to God, and testifying his own precious hopes, and the prospects that cheered him as he bade them farewell. He subsequently conversed but little. His manly frame was

exhausted. Three days after this the strong man bowed himself to the impotence and dust of death. An inscrutable Providence made him a partaker in his Master's sufferings; abundant grace made him a partaker in His glory.

"'God's way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known.' It is a dark day in which we live. There is a fearful dying of God's faithful ministers and people, as though He would take them away from the evil that is coming on the land, on the Church, and on the world, and hide them in His own pavilion. It is a dark day to a loving and bereaved family and congregation, when such a husband, such a father, such a pastor, is summoned from earth to heaven. It is a dark day to Brooklyn, when, amid bold and unchecked errors, a man of such firm principles, and conservative, equable spirit, is removed from so commanding a pulpit. It is a dark day to *us*, his brethren in the ministry, when a light that burned so brightly, and which we had hoped would burn so long, is put out. He who addresses you has been permitted to live while two generations of ministers have dropped around him into the grave. We adore God's goodness, while we still feel that His ways are dark, and that He is speaking to us in His voice of storms. We are dumb with silence, and can only look round for some refuge in this day of trouble."

Introduction.

THE MEANS AND METHODS TO BE ADOPTED FOR A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY.

WHAT is the *chief* end of the Christian ministry? Such a question, however momentous, might seem, and ought to be now, superfluous. Yet it is not so. What is known may be forgotten—what is admitted may be neglected—what is acknowledged to be a primary object may be lost sight of amidst other matters of secondary importance. And this it is to be feared is, to a considerable extent, the case with the subject before us. The end of the Christian ministry must, of necessity, be identical with that of the mediation of Christ. The cross and the pulpit, as to their design, must be in harmony. What an ineffable honour does this confer upon the minister of the gospel, by bringing him into direct fellowship with the Son of God in his great redeeming work. But this dignity is secured only by keeping the end perpetually in view. For what then did the Son of God offer himself up in sacrifice on Calvary? The glory of God in the eternal salvation of immortal souls. In that sublime purpose is the end of the Christian ministry. The apostle has told us this, where he says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—2 Cor. v, 20. So again he says in another place, “Whom we preach,

warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."—Col. i, 28. The same view is presented in those impressive words, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief."—Heb. xiii, 17. Our whole race are under the curse of a violated law, and were going down to perdition: Christ, in the plan and purpose of infinite mercy, has died to redeem them from the curse; and the design of the ministry is to bring men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; to the possession of a new moral nature and the practice of a holy life; and thus to be the means of their eternal salvation. Where this is not accomplished—where souls are not converted and saved—the chief end of the ministry is not gained. There may be much sound and clear exposition of the Word of God, and much eloquent descant upon religious truth; a large congregation may be gathered, full of admiration for the talents and affection for the person of the preacher; the church may be in harmony; there may be much liberality in the support of public institutions; the shepherd and the flock may be satisfied with each other—but if this be all; if conversion be not effected and souls are not saved—the end of the ministry is not gained. The great object of preaching is lost in every soul that is not regenerated and redeemed. There may be, there is, in very many cases, some external prosperity, where, as regards the chief end of the ministry, the preacher labours in vain and spends his strength for nought.

It must be borne in mind that we are now dwelling upon the *chief* end of the ministry. There are many *subordinate* ends which are by no means unimportant.

The explanation of the Word of God ; the comfort of the afflicted ; the good order and peace of families by the cultivation of the domestic virtues ; the well-being of society by the inculcation of Christian morality, are all objects before the mind, and promoted by the labours, of the faithful pastor. But to whatever extent these benefits may be conferred from the pulpit, they are not its chief purpose. Let it be written in letters of light, *that the conversion of the soul of apostate man to God, is the ultimate design of the ministry.* A preacher of the gospel is not merely the teacher of a sacred science ; not merely the leader of religious worship ; not merely the administrator of religious ordinances ; not merely the ruler of a Christian church—he is all this, it is true ; but he is more, he is instrumentally the converter of men's souls to God : and all the other things just mentioned are depeudent upon this. And he that is satisfied with the former, in whatever measure he may excel in them, is contenting himself with a success that leaves him infinitely short of his ultimate object. To leave off with these lesser ends, is just as if we should be satisfied with regulating the conversation, and promoting the order of a company of condemned criminals in a prison, without attempting to induce them to use the prescribed means for saving their lives. For the accomplishment of *this* end—I mean real conversion to God—we need a holy unction from above, a consecrating spirit, a yearning over souls, a wrestling with God, as in Gethsemane, for a new baptism of the ministry with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Then, let the man who is not blessed in the conversion of souls—who does not hear the question, “ What shall I do to be saved ? ” addressed, and *often* addressed to him by anxious inquirers—say, and sorrowfully say, “ I am

losing the end of my ministry. I have a good congregation—my people are pleased with my labours—all is quiet and harmonious in the church, and so far I am thankful for these things;—but souls are not converted to God—my people are not awakened to a concern about salvation. I am spending my strength for nought; and labouring in vain: I am wearing out life without fruit that will follow me into eternity, and be my crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ Jesus.” This is true; and a melancholy truth it is. And if they were duly alive to the nature and importance of the great work they have to do, and were anxiously concerned about its results, it is a confession which many ministers have to make, a lamentation they have to utter,—an unconvertng ministry is a fruitless one.

In considering the want of success, which attends the ministry of the Word, something no doubt may be set down to the sovereignty of God, but far more to the defects, the negligence, the indolence of man. It seems to be everywhere taken for granted, in the Scriptures, that right means for conversion would be followed with the intended result. The declaration, that “Paul plants, and Apollos waters, while God gives the increase,” is not designed to repress, but to encourage, hope. All ministers would be more useful if they took the proper means to obtain it. To appeal to facts,—are not those most useful who are most anxious, laborious, and wise in their *endeavours* to be useful? And are not *they* most useful in those periods of their ministry, when they lay themselves out most assiduously for this purpose? The gospel is adapted to convert souls—God is willing to convert souls—the Spirit is poured out to convert souls; and where proper means are earnestly used for this purpose, souls,

in greater or less numbers, *are* converted. How is it, then, that souls are not converted under the ministry of some men, with an instrumentality intended by God to accomplish this end, and withal so *adapted* to it. That it is *not* secured in innumerable cases is too evident to be denied.

This is a matter so intensely interesting, so infinitely important, that it should become a subject of anxious research; and for the solution of this difficulty, I here propose some questions.—Is conversion itself understood and admitted to be a scriptural doctrine? Would it not appear from a great deal of the preaching we hear in this day, that even some reputedly orthodox men, professedly evangelical ministers, begin, if not to repudiate, yet so to modify the doctrine of conversion, as to take away its very essence? Does the fact of man's fallen, corrupt nature, and the necessity of that great change, which the Scriptures designate *the new birth*, occupy that place in modern preaching which it ought to do, and which it used to do, in the times of Whitfield and his successors? Has it indeed that place in the *creed* of some modern preachers which belongs to it?

The conversion of the unregenerate, as a *specific object*, seems to be in some men's preaching almost entirely left out. Ah! so was it not in the preaching of holy Baxter! "I confess," said he, in his "Reformed Pastor"—a book which we ministers ought often to read—"I am forced frequently to neglect that which should tend to the further increase of knowledge in the godly, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Many a time have I known that I had some hearers of higher fancies, that looked for rarities, and were addicted to despise the ministry if I told them not somewhat more than ordi-

nary: and yet I could not find it in my heart to turn from the observation of the necessities of the impenitent for the humouring of those, nor to leave speaking to the apparently miserable for their salvation, to speak to such novelists—no; nor so much as should otherwise be done to the weak for their confirmation and increase of grace. He that will let a sinner go to hell for want of speaking to him, doth set less by souls than the Redeemer of souls did. O, therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whoever you pass over, forget not poor souls that are under the curse and condemnation of the law, and may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change do not take place. *O, care for the impenitent, and ply the great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone!*”

It is not intended by these remarks to affirm that *conversion* is the whole of salvation, and should therefore be the whole subject of the ministry. Regeneration is only one part of salvation. Justification by faith—sanctification in all its branches by the Holy Spirit—consolation for the afflicted—all the virtues of a robust and healthy piety—must be inculcated from the pulpit, by the man of God who is thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Salvation is a word which comprehends all this, and every faithful minister must seek to build up his flock upon their holy faith, leading them to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. He must lead them on from first principles, and not be always laying the foundations of the superstructure of personal godliness. There are the young men and the fathers to be fed with knowledge of a higher kind. An edifying ministry, as well as a converting one, must be maintained.

This is all true; but then the preacher must begin with conversion. His hearers cannot grow, if they do not live; cannot go forward in the way of truth and holiness, if they do not enter it. His first great object should therefore be *conversion*. It should be in his heart intensely to long for this definite object; in his mind to devise means for accomplishing it; and in his sermons and general conduct to seek it. "I am pleased," he should say, "with the respect, affection, and attendance of my people; but I want, I long, I pray for their *conversion*."

And here a question arises, how this should be sought. There are two ways of this.

I.

BY THE PUBLIC PREACHING OF THE WORD.

It is the preaching of the cross that is "the power of God unto salvation." It is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of preaching. But then it must be preaching *adapted to produce conversion*. All truths are important; all must be inculcated; but all are not equally adapted to promote specific ends. There are very many subjects in the Scriptures which, as matters of revelation, are of importance, and ought to be explained; but they are not all specially adapted, nor intended, to promote conversion. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," one part "for doctrine," another "for reproof," another "for correction," another "for instruction in righteousness." Let us now, therefore, go on to consider what truths are adapted for conversion. This is the more necessary to examine, as it is to be feared that some modern sermonising is little likely to accomplish this end. There is a great deal of abstract and sensible discussion; much fine thinking; able disquisitions; eloquent descants; interesting analysis; sound

argument; instructive exegesis; poetic imagination. And no doubt all these things are very agreeable, desirable, and in some way useful. They should have their place in the pulpit. It is a thinking age, and the demands of the age should be met by the preacher. I am very far from inculcating the eternal repetition of a few elementary truths, in a loose, unstudied, declamatory style of composition. Our congregations are better educated; trained more to habits of thinking; and furnished with more information than they were, and cannot be satisfied with endless reiterations—mere common-place ideas. They want food for the mind—thoughts, not words only; teachings that shall give thoughtful men something to employ their intellects, while it shall at the same time sanctify their hearts and regulate their lives. Never was there such a demand for intellectual power in the pulpit as now. Let the demand, in a legitimate way, be met; but in endeavouring to please the intellect, let us not forget to seek the conversion of the soul. We are not so much philosophers, lecturers, orators, scholars, for man as a rational creature; as preachers *to* man as a lost sinner: and our object should be so to meet the demands of the former, as never for a moment to lose sight of the latter.

In all preaching there should be *a prevalence of the converting element*; i. e., of truths, and the manner of treating them, which are likely to rouse the hearer to the state of his soul; to show him his condition as a sinner; to awaken a deep solicitude for his eternal welfare, by convincing him of his danger; to make him feel the necessity of repentance and faith; and to urge him to flee, without delay, to Christ for salvation. Almost any truth of the Bible may be so handled as to lead to this. And we are

sometimes surprised to find what subjects the Spirit, in his sovereign agency, employs for the purpose of producing conviction and conversion. Some preachers may discuss the most likely subjects so coldly as to produce no interest in the minds of their hearers ; while others, by a holy skill and earnestness, may make almost any truth bear upon the conscience, and awaken solicitude. Still this does not disprove the assertion, that some truths are *more* adapted to convert the soul than others. The preaching that is destitute of these, must be considered as deplorably deficient. I do not mean that it is necessary in every sermon to state the plan of salvation ; or to seek conversion as the end of every discourse. For my own part I think this calculated to deprive the gospel, by constant repetition and familiarity, of its proper effect. Yet conversion should never be long out of the preacher's mind, nor the truths adapted to promote it long absent from his sermons.

In inquiring what these truths are, and settling with ourselves what kind of preaching is likely, by the blessing of God, to convert sinners, we may gain much information by referring to those preachers who have been most successful in this way ; and also to those *books* which have been most honoured of God for this purpose. If we go back to the times of our Puritan and Nonconformist ancestors, and read the sermons of Howe, Manton, Clarkson, Flavel, and especially Baxter—men who were so eminently blessed in their day ; or if we refer to Whitfield and Wesley, and the whole Methodistic school ; or study the American pulpit, as set forth in the sermons of President Davies, Jonathan Edwards, and others of modern times, and our own country—Bradley, Parsons, Chalmers, and M'Cheyne ; or if we look at those living preachers

who have been most honoured of God, in the way of conversion ;—we can be at no loss to learn what kind of preaching is likely to be followed with these blessed results. In all these instances we see a great prevalence of the converting element—the necessity of conviction, repentance, faith, and the new birth.

But there is another way of arriving at this conclusion, and that is by considering the *books* which have been most successful in accomplishing these ends. Now, as we would not silence all preaching but that which seeks this object, so neither would we place in an *index expurgatorius* all books which do not aim at this. That were preposterous and absurd. We should be thankful to God for our abundant, varied, and excellent religious literature. A well-selected and well-stored library of doctrinal, controversial, exegetical, and practical theology, is one of the richest, noblest, and sublimest treasures on our earth. By those precious volumes, the ministry is furnished for the pulpit, the polemic for his controversy, the active Christian for his spiritual life, and the suffering believer for his scenes of sorrow and distress. All honour to the men who have supplied us with these inestimable treasures, by which they being dead yet speak to us. And honour be to those also of our own day, who are accumulating, by the productions of their minds and of their pens, this opulence of sacred thought. But we are now inquiring after the means of producing a specific result, a result of infinite moment, and that is, “What are the works which God has blessed for saving souls?” In former times there were Baxter’s “Call,” and Alleine’s “Alarm to the Unconverted,” and Boston’s “Four-fold State.” Then came that admirable work, notwithstanding its too systematic arrangements of the beginning and growth of

personal godliness, Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." Later still, and nearer our own times, Witherspoon "On Regeneration," Wilberforce's "Practical View," the publications of the Religious Tract Society, Pike's "Persuasives to Early Piety," Dr. Redford's "Great Change," Mr. Newman Hall's "Come to Jesus," his father's "Sinner's Friend." And there is another publication to which I hope I shall not be deemed wanting in modesty if I allude—I mean "The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation directed and encouraged." It is not the indulgence of a spirit of vain-glory, as He can witness who searcheth all hearts; nor is it the obtrusion of my gratitude to God upon public notice, for the honour he has put upon that work, which leads me now to refer at some length to the circulation and success of that little unpretending volume. I have other, higher, and holier objects in view, in thus bringing forward my own work. In this country its circulation has reached more than half a million; and in America, to perhaps a greater number. It has been translated, without any interference or suggestion of mine, into twelve languages. Its success in the conversion of souls surpasses my conception. One instance out of hundreds, if not thousands, may be mentioned. In one of the back settlements of America, where no settled ministry had been obtained, an individual had a copy of the work, which was lent from one to the other; and having awakened a general solicitude about salvation, twenty-seven persons dated their conversion from the perusal of that solitary copy. Accounts of the instances of its usefulness that have been sent to me would fill a volume, and do fill me with wonder, gratitude, and praise. I feel humbly, yet thankfully, the conviction, that if I had lived for no

other purpose than to write that tract, I have existed for a most momentous purpose. And why, I again ask, do I thus advert to that work? Simply and exclusively to illustrate my present subject, concerning the means which God blesses for the conversion of souls. Let the work be examined, and it will be seen in a moment that it contains no profound logic; no display of rhetoric; no lofty theology; no poetic imagination; no novel speculation; in short, no *intellectual prowess of any kind whatever*; nothing but a simple, intelligible statement of gospel truth, made so plain that "he that runs may read, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein;" and enforced with an affectionate earnestness that makes the reader feel the author is concerned for his salvation. It is a book so purely elementary and alphabetic in its character, that almost any one at all accustomed to commit his thoughts to paper, and who knows the way of salvation and the workings of the sinner's heart, could have written it. Apart from its adaptation to the end which it contemplates, and the success which follows it, it reflects no distinguished honour upon its author, entitles him to no praise, and confers upon him no literary glory. Yet it has been wonderfully owned of God, and blessed for the accomplishment of his purposes of love and mercy to the children of men.

What then are the truths which "The Anxious Inquirer" exhibits, and which, under God, give it such power over the sinner's mind and heart? Man's ruin by sin—his redemption by Christ—his regeneration by the Spirit, with all that is necessary to direct, encourage, and help him to put his trust in the Saviour. Within how narrow a compass, and in what simple truths, do those topics lie, which God usually blesses for the conversion of sinners. My

reasoning, then, upon the usefulness of "The Anxious Inquirer," and other similar works, is this,—that it may be fairly inferred, the same truths directed to the soul through the ear by preaching, may be expected to produce the same blessed result as they do, when directed to the soul through the eye, by means of books. If these truths, when presented by a book, convert the soul, they may be expected to produce the same result when presented in a sermon. It is by truth that God effects the great change, whether that truth is conveyed by a book read or a sermon heard. And it is by truth adapted in its own nature to produce this effect. The advantage, in the way of impressing truth upon the mind, is altogether on the side of preaching. The soul of man is usually much more moved by what he hears than by what he reads, especially when he hears it in a public assembly, and has all the aids of sympathy and the solemnities of time and place to fix the attention and deepen the impression. If, then, the simple truths set forth in "The Anxious Inquirer" so affect the mind when read in the silence and solitude of the closet, what results might not be expected from these same truths, when published by an impressive oratory from the pulpit, and with all the auxiliaries supplied by the house of God, and a listening congregation. It is well, proper, and necessary for a minister to study books of learned criticism, of profound theology, and controversial divinity. He must go and sit at the feet of the masters in Israel, and become versed, as he may be able, in all the sacred literature of the age. But it would be a profitable exercise for him occasionally to take up and study the most elementary treatises which God has honoured for the conversion of souls, and with a docile mind—a mind anxious to become proficient in the art of

winning souls to Christ—be willing to learn from them how to wield the weapons of his warfare. A person of inquisitive genius, who has heard of the extraordinary success of any instrument,—say an instrument of husbandry,—or any mode of action, in his own line, takes it up, if he has an opportunity, and says to himself, “What is the nature, the construction, the adaptation of this article or its mode of action? What is the secret of its success?” He is not deterred by its apparent simplicity from minutely examining it. That very simplicity commends it to his attention. He wants to know how to use it. He is solicitous to turn it to his own advantage. In like manner, ministers should take up any work that has been unusually successful in conversion, and say, “What, under God, is the secret of the usefulness of this book?”

The same remark applies to preachers as to books. It is well occasionally to have our minds elevated, our powers taxed, our ambition fired, by listening to one of those great sermons which are delivered on particular occasions by our most distinguished preachers. But it is far more desirable and important for ministers sometimes to place themselves under the teaching of one of those servants of the cross, who, though making no pretensions to a high order of intellectuality, or a profound habit of thought, is well skilled in this blessed art of winning souls to Christ. Often our young ministers are too eager to hear, and too ambitious to emulate, our *great* preachers, rather than our *good* ones; and perhaps these distinguished men too often preach great sermons rather than good ones. It is not to be expected nor desired that they who preach as none, or few others can, should always descend to the level of ordinary minds; but if, on public occasions, they sometimes exhibited their greatness more obviously in connection

with usefulness ; if they would unite fervour with grandeur, and to their younger brethren set an example of intense earnestness and dignified simplicity, would they not confer a richer benefit upon the church and the world than by one of those excessively elaborated and abstract discourses, of necessity read from notes, which seem fitted rather for a book than a sermon ? It has sometimes occurred to me, that our more distinguished preachers have a vast responsibility attaching to them. They never appear on public occasions without being followed by many of their juniors, and, in point of talent, their inferiors, who are apt to regard them with admiration, as models for their own imitation, and who, while the strains of lofty, though perhaps comparatively *inefficient*, eloquence are flowing from their lips, feel a swelling ambition in their souls to go and do likewise. If these young men were only stimulated to *diligence* by these displays of talent, they might be greatly benefited by them ; but, unfortunately, they are often led astray to attempt what is far above them, and seek to be great, without the *ability* for greatness. Thus, their motives are corrupted, and, in seeking after splendour and elaboration, they lose at once the desire and the means of being useful. Hence, let our pulpit magnates take heed what examples they set, for they have all their imitators. What an example did Doddridge give, when surrounded by his brethren he addressed to them that wonderfully pathetic and powerful sermon on "The Guilt and Danger of Neglecting Souls."

There have been men of whose soundness of doctrine, and even earnest desire to be useful in the salvation of souls, there could exist no doubt, but whose habits of thought were so lofty, so far above the minds of the generality of their audience, and who found it so absolutely

difficult, if not impossible, to descend to the level of ordinary minds, that their preaching, however useful in other ways, was attended with small results in that of conversion. These men have themselves been aware of their deficiency, and bitterly bewailed it. A remarkable instance of this kind occurred in the late Dr. M'All. In speaking of whom, Dr. Wardlaw, in his review of the life and character of that illustrious man prefixed to his published sermons, says, "It will hardly, I presume, admit of a doubt, that, in the general style of his preaching, there was more than enough of what has been, not inappropriately, called '*shooting over the heads*' of his hearers. This might, in many instances, be owing to the forgetting that his own mind was not a fair standard of estimate for the general mind of a congregation; and that what was to him familiar, even as the alphabet of knowledge, might be far above the range of even well-educated minds that could not compete with his gigantic powers, and were strangers to his habits of thought." It was not, however, so much the abstruseness of the subjects, the severity of his logic, or the depth and abstractness of his thought, which rendered Dr. M'All's preaching so comparatively inefficient in the way of conversion, as must be apparent to all who have read his printed discourses, as the generalities of his topics, the excess of beautiful, eloquent illustration, and the great want of direct aim at the heart and conscience of the sinner; in short, the lack of that simplicity of representation, on the subject of sin and salvation, which should ever characterise the preaching of the Gospel. The natural result of this in his case was that his preaching was not very useful in the way of direct and palpable conversions. He knew, confessed, and lamented this. To his friends he often referred to it, and was wont

to say, "I have admiration enough, but I want to see conversion and edification." He spoke of some neighbouring ministers, whose churches, he said, resembled a garden which the Lord had blessed, or whose spots of verdure were more vivid than his own; but added, that his emotions, in making the comparison, partook of a gladness for them that absorbed or overwhelmed him with sorrow for himself. "I remember," says one of his friends, "on one occasion, after a brilliant speech from himself, he listened to a much plainer and less oratorical brother, whose address, however, seemed much more penetrating on the minds of the audience, and produced an appearance of being deeply affected on their countenances. At that moment, the speaker, hearing a loud sobbing behind him, turned round. It was M'All. 'Ah,' said he, afterward, 'that effect in such a legitimate way I would give the world to be able to produce.'" To another ministerial friend he said, "I care nothing what people think of or say of my abilities, if I may but be useful to souls;" and once, with a swelling indignation, "God knows I do not want their applause—I *want their salvation*." It is perfectly evident from this affecting account, as well as from a perusal of his printed sermons, and from hearing him preach by those who were thus favoured, that, notwithstanding his knowledge of the gospel of our salvation, and his belief of the essential doctrines of divine truth, combined with his intense desire to be useful in the conversion of sinners, he did not well know how this blessed effect was to be accomplished by himself, and really felt the deficiency under which he laboured. He could convince the understanding by logic; he could delight the imagination by poetic representation; he could touch the feelings by tender and beautiful description; but he knew not very

well how to *grapple with the conscience*. It was not his to bring down the Gospel in all the simplicity of Christ to the level of ordinary minds, and to enforce it upon their acceptance by a mode of representation so plain as not to be mistaken, and so earnest as not to be resisted. He could and did descant upon the Gospel so loftily and so beautifully as to fill with rapture those who already knew, believed, and loved it; but how to bring it into contact with the hard heart and benumbed conscience of the callous transgressor; how to make it obvious to the dark intellect of the mass of impenitent sinners; how first to awaken and then to relieve the solicitude expressed in the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" how to meet the case of the anxious inquirer after salvation, he knew, perhaps, less than some who were greatly his inferiors.

Is there not a very considerable class of preachers, who, notwithstanding their undoubted orthodoxy and some desire to be useful, accomplish but little in the way of conversion? Their sermons are not wanting in evangelical truth. They preach the gospel, but it is in so abstract and theoretical a way as is little calculated to awaken the sympathies of the heart, or call into activity the functions of the conscience. Their discourses are rather elaborate essays for the people to hear, than direct and pungent addresses for them to feel. You would suppose, in hearing them, either that in the congregation there were no sinners to be converted, or that *they* did not desire their conversion, or did not know how to attempt it. They regale their congregations, disciplined in the art and practice of listening to sermons as amateurs, sunday after sunday, with a rich intellectual treat of sacred eloquence; and they enable even the pious mind to luxuriate amidst religious truth, set

forth in an elegant style of composition; but how to storm the citadel of the soul, and compel it to surrender to Christ, they know not. They can teach the higher themes of religion to the more advanced learners in the school of Christ, but they cannot come down to the level of a little child's capacity, and with patient effort teach him the alphabet. They cannot, as preachers, act like the poet of our sanctuary, who could teach sages philosophy and write catechisms for infants—compose divine songs which babes might sing, and hymns which an archangel might warble without demeaning himself.

A deplorable want of *directness* characterises much of the preaching of the present day. The earnest appeal; the startling remark; the pointed and pithy observation; the pathetic expostulation; the awakening interrogation; the careful discrimination, which, as Mr Hall says, "shall enable every individual to know where to class himself, and make his conscience feel the hand of the preacher searching it,"—these things, which characterised so strongly the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley, and the early Methodists, and which must characterise all useful preaching, are, to a considerable extent, wanting in the modern pulpit; and have been succeeded, it is admitted, by a more elaborate and ornate style of composition; but it is a cold and heartless exhibition of the great truths of salvation, that plays like fireworks round the imagination, but enters not the heart and conscience to purify them with the fire that comes down from heaven. We wonder not that some preachers of the gospel are not useful in the conversion of souls. It would be a wonder if they were.

At the same time we will readily admit, that we are but incompetent judges wherein usefulness consists. Men whose preaching is not adapted to effect conversion, may

often be useful in preparing for it. They may contend against the scepticism, infidelity, and heresy of the age; they may destroy the outworks by which the human heart is defended against the power of the truth; they may answer objections, beat down prejudices, awaken a general interest in religion; they may thus break up the fallow ground, and make way for the sower to cast the seed of the kingdom into the good ground. In these and other ways they may lay extensive foundations for a superstructure of future benefit, even though their own labours in word and doctrine, how sound soever and faithful, may not be honoured by many real conversions. "On these conversions, however," says Dr. Wardlaw, "every servant of Christ should set his heart, and beware of laying any flattering unction to his soul, while no such tokens of the divine blessing upon his ministry present themselves. He should be instant for them in season and out of season—pleading for God with men; and, that he may succeed, pleading for men with God—solicitous, whatever be the result, to 'deliver his own soul,' and to be able with truth to say—'I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.'"

It is surprising how some preachers can be contented to go on year after year without any evidence of conversion, and without any inquiry into the cause of their want of usefulness. Ought they not to institute a most rigid inquiry into their ministerial and pastoral habits, in order to ascertain whether there is anything in their mode of preaching, or their official conduct, which hinders their success? Can they really understand the design of their office, and at the same time be aware of the awful and eternal consequences which must in every case result from

its failure, and be satisfied, though none are converted by their ministrations from the error of their ways? What! go carelessly and contentedly forward, while the souls of their hearers are perishing in their sins, and while their own ministry is only a savour of death unto death to them? Is this watching for souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief? Can that man, who is not anxious about the salvation of the souls of his hearers, and who mourns not with bitter grief and disappointment over his want of success, and does not sorrowfully and honestly inquire into the causes of his failure, *pretend* to have the mind of Christ, or any sympathy with him in his tears, and agonies, and death, for souls? "A minister is either the greatest of fools and the most baseless of braggarts, or he holds a commission which to hold, and be careless while holding it, furnishes one of the darkest proofs and the most guilty manifestations of human depravity. His office itself is either the wildest extravagance, or it is the most solemn and weighty of human thoughts." And are there not many of us who should seriously consider this? Are *any* of us sufficiently earnest about *conversion*? Does not the subject press far too lightly on our minds, hearts, and consciences? Do we really believe the principles we profess concerning the soul, and the soul's salvation or damnation? If so, let us act up to our principles, and be anxious, restless, and laborious for direct and palpable conversions. Then, and then only, do we obtain the chief end of our ministry, when these are effected. The grand design of the gospel in regard to men, being their conversion to God and what follows it, the primary element in the usefulness of its ministers, must consist in the accomplishment of this purpose.

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Can it then be necessary to stir up the pure minds of my brethren, by way of remembrance, to make this the chief end of their ministry, and to consider nothing done effectually for any of their hearers till this is done? Let them most solemnly consider what, in the way of the final issue, is involved in every case of true regeneration, and every case of final impenitence. Let them ponder those weighty expressions of the apostle—"He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Shall save a soul from death! What an achievement! A greater result than saving from mere temporal death the inhabitants of a town, a city, a nation, or even a world! The salvation of a single soul from death is an event which no mind can fully comprehend but that of the omniscient and eternal God. It is a blessing infinite in value, and eternal in duration. What are the applauses of a congregation for that which is eloquent, or profound, or novel; what the smiles and compliments of a gratified audience, from time to time, for that which is tasteful and interesting; what the popularity which fills a city, a denomination, or an age with its fame—compared with saving a single soul from death? How soon will all these ephemeral rewards of our public labours wither like a garland in the sun, and perish for ever! The only result of our ministry which will follow us to heaven and endure through eternity, is the conversion of souls: and this *will*. Yes, and flourish on our brow like a chaplet of amaranth, when not only the laurels that have been won by the conquerors in the world of art and the battle-fields of genius, but the proud works of their skill, shall have perished for ever in the last conflagration. Why, the very men that praise our sermons. but are not con-

verted by them, will, in another world, exchange their applause for censure, and be ready to vent their execrations upon us that we were not more intent upon their salvation, and did not labour more earnestly for it. How would it tend to elevate our aims, to enlarge our views, to purify our motives, and give intensity to our solicitude for the salvation of our hearers, did we more frequently and more earnestly transfer our views from time to eternity. How would it quicken our endeavours after conversion, did we but look upon our congregations, not merely in the light of so many persons come to hear a sermon from our lips, and whom we were anxious to please by something which they would admire; but as so many lost souls brought together to hear from us words whereby they may be saved; as so many sinners gathered round our pulpit to learn the way of pardon; as so many unconverted persons collected to receive those truths whereby they may be regenerated; as so many immortal beings brought to us to be prepared for immortality itself. Each one of these has an eternal destiny awaiting him; and what that destiny will be, depends in some measure upon us. Such a view of our congregations would surely convince us that everything short of conversion is infinitely below the chief end of the ministry, and of the aim and ambition of those who are called to the discharge of its sacred functions.

Preaching, however, is not the only means by which conversion is to be sought by the ministers of the gospel; another well adapted, momentous, and, I am sorry to add, much neglected method is—

THE CAREFUL AND JUDICIOUS TREATMENT, BY PRIVATE AND PERSONAL CONVERSATION, OF INDIVIDUAL CASES OF PERSONS UNDER RELIGIOUS CONCERN.

If we look at the practice of medical men in our hospitals, we find that they do not merely deliver clinical lectures in the wards of their patients, nor address them collectively on the general principles of disease and healing; but that they individualise them, and treat each separate case according to its nature and symptoms. Something like this, to a certain extent—for of course we cannot thus reach the whole congregation—ought to be the practice of the ministers of the gospel. True it is, that the idiosyncracies in the spiritual condition of our hearers are not so numerous nor so obvious as those of the bodily sufferers in a hospital; nor do they depend quite so much upon our personal attention and separate treatment. But they are still very numerous, and need skilful and appropriate attention. It is a common fault of the ministry to be too much satisfied with *preaching* to the congregation, to the neglect of this dealing with individual cases in private. The sermon begins and ends the duty of some ministers. Even if people call upon them in solicitude about their souls, they scarcely like to be intruded upon and interrupted in their studies. They take no pains to become acquainted with the spiritual condition of their hearers, nor to ascertain even the effect of their own sermons. Far be it from me to think or speak lightly of preaching, or of the necessity of close study in order to preach effectually. Nothing, not even the personal attention to the individual cases of the flock which I am now recommending, can excuse the neglect of this. But preaching is not everything to be done, however *well* it may be done, by the ministers of the gospel. Much of the beneficial effect of *this* is lost for want of something else; and that is;—the plan of personal intercourse illustrated so strikingly in the following work.

It is utterly inconceivable that where the preaching is adapted to produce impression, and the preacher is really in earnest, none should be impressed by it. From every solemn and awakening discourse, many go away thoughtful and serious. Lost among the crowd of light and frivolous hearers which retire from the sanctuary, there is here and there one to whose mind ideas have been given that were never there before, and which have awakened a new solicitude. The arrow shot at random has grazed or pierced the heart of some hitherto careless sinner. Nothing, however, is more evanescent than religious impressions, unless they are nourished and followed up by subsequent and appropriate means. Now the aim of the preacher should be, to come to the knowledge of those cases of incipient religious concern. To preach, and be careless about the result; to consider that *we* have done all when the sermon is ended—betrays a mind and heart deplorably wanting in ministerial solicitude. After sermons intended to awaken the careless and convert the impenitent, the earnest minister will say—"Have I not done some good to-day? Have not some been impressed and convinced? Can I have been so earnest, and have roused no slumbering conscience? Is it possible, or, at any rate, probable, that such truths can be preached altogether without effect?" Nor will he stop here, but will take some steps and some pains to *ascertain* the result. Perhaps no men are less inquisitive and laborious to find out the immediate position and practical results of their endeavours than preachers. Many a minister is really more useful than he supposes, and by searching out the fruit of his labours would have much discouragement removed from his mind, and a fresh stimulus given to his exertions. He would discover, did he search for

them, many an inquirer after salvation, in whose soul the first conviction of sin was produced by sermons which he had almost forgotten he ever delivered. Now there are two ways of finding out such cases, set forth in the following sketches :—

First—*By personal visits.* Dr. Spencer marked in his own mind the case of particular individuals, and visited them at their own homes. I am aware that in large congregations, and large towns also, this may not be easily accomplished. Yet it was accomplished in his case, in the large and crowded city of New York, or, what is much the same, in Brooklyn, which is very near it, separated only by a narrow strait. Were we so disposed we could all do more in this way than we are in the habit of doing. We sometimes see in our congregations, persons evidently under deep impression from the sermon. We cannot mistake the fact that our address is telling upon their heart and conscience. The fixedness of their attention, the seriousness of their countenance, the tear in their eye, prove this. They are also regular in their attendance, and we see this appearance of solicitude and deep interest Sabbath after Sabbath. Here then are, or ought to be, objects of our attention, care, and solicitude. Without loss of time, we should endeavour by some means to gain a knowledge of, and access to, such persons. This may in many cases be difficult, and will require considerable caution. In addition to the difficulty of their being in situations all but inaccessible to us, it is a somewhat delicate matter to speak on the subject of religion to those who have not first spoken to us. Much tact and prudence are requisite, and much kindness of manner, in introducing such a topic as the spiritual state of another person's mind. Everything rudely obtrusive, harshly severe, or offen-

sively inquisitorial, must be avoided. It may be thought, and perhaps there is some truth in the idea, that such a method of doing good requires a peculiar talent which all do not possess. That some have a greater facility in this method, and can conduct it with greater ease, grace, and acceptableness than others, may be granted: but most ministers, could they be persuaded to adopt it, would find they have *some* ability for this, and that practice would give them an aptitude for it. It so happens that the wealthier classes are more difficult of access for such labours of love, than the poor. We all find a greater embarrassment in addressing them than we do their hard-working neighbours. The fact is, we want, first of all, that deep solicitude for their salvation, and then that moral courage which are requisite for such offices of ministerial fidelity; and which, did we possess them, would break down the barriers which thus hinder our usefulness. No doubt in some cases there would be, in the persons addressed, a shrinking away from the most cautious, kind, and respectful manner. In such instances, it would be injudicious and injurious to press the matter too urgently. Admirable instances of this will be found in the work now introduced to the reader. But where solicitude has been really awakened, and the soul is moved with the anxiety implied in that great question, "What shall I do to be saved?" our conversation would be generally most welcome and most beneficial; the awakened sinner would receive and hail us as a messenger of mercy, and a comforter of the afflicted. Let any one imagine how, when the timidity and modest reserve of such a person are overcome, his mind will be soothed, relieved, and guided by the counsels of a skilful pastor. In dealing with such, it is necessary not only to

communicate our thoughts, but we must know theirs. There are in many cases some false views, some defects of duty, some secret faults, some cherished prejudices, some perplexing difficulties, some groundless objections, which keep them from the reception of the truth, and from peace and joy in believing, which no mere general exhibition of the Gospel can remove, but which may be all met by private conversation. It is a common thing for anxious inquirers to suppose there is some peculiarity in their case, which discourses from the pulpit do not meet. Private intercourse brings out all this, and enables a judicious guide to remove these stumbling-blocks out of the way. Half an hour's conversation with such individuals may be more beneficial than scores of sermons. In vain is the gospel heard, till this subjective obstacle to its reception is displaced.

How much do we all lose for want of this notice and treatment of single cases. How much of our ministry is unsuccessful for want of this kind, judicious, and persevering attention to *individuals*. True, there is not the excitement produced in our mind by the public address to the congregation; true, there is often more difficulty felt and more patience required in dealing with one single soul, entangled and bewildered in the meshes of ignorance, doubt, and despondency, than in composing and delivering a whole discourse from the pulpit; true, it might seem a wider sphere of usefulness to touch by one sermon hundreds of minds at once. Yes, but how many of these minds are in a state not to be *efficiently* touched by that sermon, but which can be, and would be, efficiently touched by the private conversation. We little know what hearts in our congregation are longing, almost to bursting, for a little personal intercourse with a kind and judicious

minister. I can recollect the early days of my own conversion to God, when I yearned for such an interview with the minister, and stood at the corner of the street, watching him with tears to his own home, silently exclaiming, "Oh, that he would speak to me;" and yet, I had not the courage to go to him. Had he given only a public notice that he would be glad to converse at his vestry or his home, with any who were anxiously inquiring after salvation, I should have hailed the notice as water to a thirsty soul. This shows that ministers should let it be *known* and *felt* that they are easy of access to all who are burdened with the solitudes of an incipient conversion. They should, they must, and they *can*, if they try, find out such cases; they are not faithful if they neglect to do so, and cannot be said to watch for souls as they that must give account. The scrutiny which Christ will make at the last day will not only be into the manner in which we have dealt with the congregation as a whole, but with the individuals of which it is composed. It is an alarming idea that our responsibility extends to every single soul.

If it were not thought too familiar an illustration, I would say that ministers, as fishers of men, are too exclusively bent on casting the net among a shoal, and drawing in many at one throw, and are not given enough to patiently angling for the solitary fish. Single souls are thought, if not beneath our notice, yet below our zeal. Have we forgotten our great Pattern, who sat for a whole hour, perhaps, or even more, by the side of a well, and laboured kindly and condescendingly for the salvation of one individual, and that a female of indifferent character? Or have we overlooked the zeal of the ancient Pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make *one* proselyte? Or may we not receive instruction from the parable of the

lost sheep, upon perceiving the solicitude and toil of the good Shepherd to restore the solitary wanderer to the fold? Or, if all this be not enough, let us learn from the conduct of the blessed angels who rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth. It is this anxiety for the conversion of single souls by conversation in private, more than the ardour of the pulpit, that tests the sincerity of our concern, and the purity of our motives. Many things, apart from the higher objects of pulpit ministration, concur to excite our zeal in public; only one, and that of a right kind, can be supposed to operate in private.

2. But there is a second method of getting at the case of individual inquirers, and which in fact makes way for the one already mentioned, which I am happy to believe is becoming more common than it once was, and is a great advance in the usefulness of our ministry; and that is *the holding of meetings for such persons collectively and exclusively*. During all the earlier years of my ministry, I contented myself with being in the vestry at certain times, which were announced on the previous Sabbath from the pulpit, to converse with such of the congregation as wished to enter into the fellowship of the church. On conversing with a friend* over our plans of pastoral labour, he mentioned to me one of his own, which was to give notice from the pulpit, that he would be at his vestry on a particular evening, not to *converse individually* with persons recently brought into a state of spiritual anxiety, but merely to address them collectively, in a way suited to their state of mind. "For," said he, "a fear of being interrogated would keep many away, who would come to be addressed with others." I was, at the time, much impressed by the judiciousness of the remark and the plan,

* Dr. Henry Burder.

and determined to try the experiment. After a discourse of more than ordinary solemnity, and which appeared to produce a deeper impression than usual, I gave out the notice from the pulpit, that on such an evening I should be at the school-room to *address* those who had been affected by the sermon, or who, by any previous means, had been brought into a state of serious concern for their souls. I took care also to intimate that it was merely to speak to them collectively, and not to interrogate or examine them individually, that I should meet them. On the appointed evening I went to the school-room, not knowing whether any, or who, would be there. To my delighted surprise, I found about a hundred persons, or probably more, certainly not less, waiting in silence, and with apparent solemnity, for my appearance. The scene quite overcame me. It was some time before I could command my feelings to address them. "Here," thought I to myself, "are more than one hundred persons come to night, most of them with the question, 'Sir, what shall we do to inherit eternal life?' and here am I to direct them into the way of salvation? How momentous my duty! How responsible my situation! How eventful the service of this evening! It was evident that great impression was produced by what I said to them, and I gave notice that I should continue the meetings for some weeks to come. Of course it was not to be supposed that all these were under intelligent and deep solicitude for salvation. Many, however, I had no doubt, were. After six or seven meetings I told them that I should no longer continue the addresses, but now wished to converse with them individually, and for that purpose would be at the vestry on certain days which I mentioned. By having met me so frequently, they had acquired confidence to accept this

invitation and speak to me ; and out of the whole number, about seventy came to me, and the result was that forty were brought into fellowship. I felt that a new view of my pastoral functions and obligations had been given me ; that a new means of usefulness had been put into my hands ; and a new era had commenced in my ministry. So it proved. This plan I continue to the present time, in connection with my excellent and active colleague. Every now and then, at intervals of various lengths, I give out a notice similar to that which I have mentioned, and generally find from thirty to sixty present. My great object in these meetings is, of course, not merely to cherish feeling and deepen impression, but to convey instruction ; for which purpose I sometimes distribute a suitable tract, the same to each individual, and enlarge upon it, and request them seriously to read it while my explanations are fresh in their recollection.

The benefits conferred by this method are acknowledged with great thankfulness by those who come from the class into the church. At such times, and with such an audience, a minister may descend to a familiarity of illustration, and use an unchecked repetition of the same idea in various lights, which he could not carry into the pulpit. Our object should be, not only to make real or even *earnest* Christians, but *intelligent* ones ; for which purpose these meetings are admirably adapted. My experience so entirely convinces me of their adaptation to usefulness, and of their being one great part of the wisdom in winning souls to Christ, that I do not see how without them we can make full proof of our ministry ; and, therefore, cannot too earnestly recommend them to my brethren. I am aware that some are so exceedingly sensitive to everything that savours of cant, and so almost morbidly jealous of

all innovations upon established usages, that they instinctively shrink from the phrase, "Meetings for Inquirers." Well, let them drop the designation if they please, and use any periphrasis to describe them, only let them adopt the thing. Do they believe in the doctrine of conversion? Do they wish to produce it? Do they think that anxiety of mind usually precedes it? Do they suppose that in their congregation there are some, if not many, who are waking up, it may be by their sermons, to a solicitude about eternal realities? If they assent to all this—and what minister is he who does not—then surely they must admit the desirableness of bringing out these awakened minds, and carrying on the work of grace in their souls. Can they devise a more apt method for doing this than that which I now recommend? Let them show me a more excellent way, and, old as I am in the ministry of the Word, I will adopt it; for never at any former period of my life was I more impressed with the idea that the conversion of souls is the great end of the Christian ministry. Everything short of this I feel to be utterly unsatisfying.

Perhaps it will be alleged that this plan may suit large congregations; but that what is necessary for them may not be called for by smaller ones. That the number of persons to whom this plan appertains is of course greater in the one case than in the other, is admitted; but are there ten, are there five, are there two, to be found of this description? Then it is worth while to hold a meeting for them. Or if not, then let the individual call already described be resorted to. *All* ministers must individualize, for all may be expected to have some in their congregations who need individual attention.

I have no doubt it will be said by some that, for the

individualizing process, and the practice of dealing with solitary cases of religious concern, recommended under the former head, and which must necessarily follow the address to the collective body enjoined under the present one, they have no time. Just as well, or nearly so, may it be said by a physician at one of our hospitals, that he has time only for clinical lectures and general directions; but none at all to attend to the individual cases of disease which are stretched upon the beds by which he is surrounded. No time! Why, what is our object? What the design of our ministry but to save souls? Is not this one way of saving them, and of giving force and emphasis to all other ways? No time! What, not to meet the anxious inquirer in his wanderings, and direct him to the cross? No time! What, not to relieve the solicitude we ourselves have awakened by our sermons? No time! What, not to watch for souls and thus to prepare for the account we must give of our ministry at the day of judgment? Can we find time for lecturing upon various topics, not, perhaps, connected with our ministry? For social intercourse? For general, perhaps light, reading? For politics? For recreation? And find none to meet the varied cases of incipient religious concern and distress which are to be found in our congregations? Can we, dare we go to our Master and tell *him* we have no time to act the part of the good shepherd, and seek the solitary stray sheep in the wilderness? If one of these single cases of persons in solicitude about salvation, and whose solicitude we had heard of, were to turn out otherwise than at one time we hoped for, and the individual after relapsing into his former unconcern, were in an agony of remorse, or with a sardonic tone of hardened indifference to say, "Why, when I was beginning to awake from carelessness, did you

not give me your sympathy and help?" could we, with an easy conscience, say, "I had no time?" What is our time for, if not for *this* work? If we neglect this, and are so taken up with general literature,—study pursuits—social intercourse—or even with excessive elaboration in sermonizing—may those words come to our ears with the power of thunder, and flash in our eyes with the piercing blaze of lightning, "Redeem time, from anything and everything, for the purpose of saving souls." God have mercy upon the minister, and shew him his fearful guilt, and give him repentance, who says he has no time to save individual souls from death.

But there are others who excuse themselves from this work by the plea that they have no aptitude, no tact for it. Before the validity of this plea is admitted, I would ask, have they ever tried? Have they not contented themselves with the work of preaching sermons, administering sacraments, conversing with those—and that, perhaps, very perfunctorily—who called upon *them*, but they have never imitated the great and good Shepherd who came to *seek* as well as to save, and to seek in order to save, them that were lost? Let no man say he cannot do *this* till he has tried. I will admit, however, without hesitation, for it cannot be denied, that some have more ability than others for this duty. They *can* converse more freely with persons under anxiety than others; they *have* more penetration into the various idiosyncracies of enquirers, more discrimination of their differences, more knowledge of their perplexities, more power to detect the subtle workings of their deceitful hearts. They are in fact more *wise* to win souls. They are like physicians whose experience has made them more skilful than others. This is conceded. But whence does this superior tact in dealing with individual souls

arise? Partly, perhaps, from natural aptitude; but more from a deeper personal experience of the power of godliness, a more intense piety, a richer enjoyment of precious faith, and the common salvation; from a more intimate acquaintance with all the stumbling-blocks to be gathered out of the sinner's way on approaching the cross; from a more intense longing after the salvation of souls; from a more unreserved consecration to this work; from a deeper conviction that this individualizing process is essential to the carrying out of the purpose of the Christian ministry; from a greater willingness to redeem time from other occupations that it may be employed in this way; from a more devoted study of all the workings of the human heart, in its unconverted state, and in its transition from indifference to solicitude, and from solicitude to settled faith and repose in Christ. Here is the tact of dealing with individual souls we are speaking of, and here the method by which it may be obtained. The way to acquire it is thus easily known.

1. Let there be a more earnest, unquenchable, insatiable longing after the salvation of sinners, and a more studied and direct aim to accomplish it by seeking their conversion in our sermons. I say again there must be a *directness* in our preaching. The converting element must prevail in it. Without this, it is not likely that there will be individuals to converse with.

2. Let there be a deep solemn conviction that this practice is our duty; that preaching, however excellent, is not everything; but that, in addition, we must follow the stricken bleeding deer to the thicket; that we can no more excuse ourselves from the latter than we can from the former.

3. Let us make the trial. In the practice of medicine,

it is experience that produces skill. When a physician commences his profession, he begins with general principles; and as individual cases come before him he applies his science to the symptoms of his patients. At first he is somewhat timid; he sometimes mistakes, but as his practice increases his experience of course enlarges, and as a natural result, he becomes more and more skilful. Tact, as it is called, is not so much the result of any natural or physical aptitudes, though these may have something to do with it, as application, observation, diligence, and experience.

4. This aptitude may also be acquired by the careful perusal of such works as this of Dr. Spencer's. To allude again to the medical profession, practitioners are guided not only by books of abstract principles, but by the records of particular cases. They see in these what treatment has been successful in certain diseases, and thus learn what methods to adopt when similar cases come into their own hands. Analogous to this it is, or should be with us ministers. We have not only valuable treatises on theology, but we now and then meet with a useful record, by some judicious hand, of the treatment of particular cases of religious concern. Some years ago, a very interesting volume was sent forth by Dr. Redford, entitled "The Pastor's Sketch Book," which contained many facts of this nature. We also find much of this in the biography of eminently useful ministers. But I know no work so entirely of such a character as this of Dr. Spencer's.

It will now be useful to consider briefly, as they are set forth in this work, his methods of ministerial labour. He was a popular and striking preacher, and might therefore have been likely to confine his exertions pretty much to

the pulpit. It is certainly a temptation to which a gifted preacher is exposed, to rely almost exclusively upon his pulpit exercises, and to neglect the more private, but not less important duties of the pastorate; forgetting that impressions made by sermons, however deep at the time, are very likely to be lost unless cherished by private and personal intercourse. Dr. Spencer appears to have been deeply imbued with the love of souls, intensely anxious for their salvation, willing to endure any labours, and ever ready to make sacrifices of ease and time to accomplish his object. He *did* watch for souls. It is deeply interesting, and to other ministers *should be* stimulating, to see him looking out for persons under religious concern, walking miles to call upon a single individual, and repeating his visits again and again to this one object of his solicitude; and never giving them over till they were crowned with success, or rendered absolutely hopeless by hardened impenitence.

In his case we see one of the most beautiful examples of this attention to individual cases I have ever met with. It was not the large and listening audience only that moved his sympathies or roused and stimulated his energies, but the single heart-stricken sinner; nor was it only that heart-stricken sinner when found in the elegant drawing-room of the wealthier members of his flock, but when suffering amidst the squalid penury of the garret. It was for souls he laboured and prayed, whether of the rich or the poor; for he knew that all are alike in the eye of God, and ought to be in his.

It is impossible, in reading these recorded cases, not to be struck with *his* admirable tact in dealing with them individually, as well as with the general principles on which he acted. It has been thought by some his methods

were too uniform, and that his practice was a kind of spiritual empiricism, prescribing one remedy for all diseases. This is just the plan of the apostles. Wherever he went, and to whomsoever he addressed himself. Paul preached repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity knows but one method of cure for our spiritual diseases. The gospel is literally a "heal-all," an universal remedy. But did not Dr. Spencer study each case with great discrimination, and adapt with wonderful skill the grand catholicon to its its peculiar symptoms? The following appear to have constituted his theory and the manner in which he applied it, and which must be adopted by all who would be useful in this way.

1. All men are to be viewed and dealt with as sinners against God, and therefore under the curse of his violated law; and also as partakers of a corrupt nature. This is neither to be concealed from them nor palliated. So that when an inquirer speaks of his actual sins, or his wicked heart, instead of being soothed or comforted by being told he is not quite so bad as he supposes, he is to be assured that in the sight of God he is more sinful than he is aware of, and that his wicked heart is *more* wicked than he supposes. His conviction must be deepened by his being shown the full extent of his guilt, depravity, danger, and misery. Any attempt to palliate his sins and make him think better of himself, only tends to diminish anxiety and wrap him up in self-righteousness.

2. As Christ by his atoning sacrifice has borne our sins, and is the sole mediator between God and man, the sinner, while he is to look into himself for conviction and to the law for condemnation, is to be directed to look

out of, and away from, himself to Christ by faith for consolation. And as the penitent is ever prone to look in various ways to himself for something to relieve, comfort, and recommend him, great pains must be taken to fill his mind with the one thought of Christ as the alone Saviour. Every effort must be made to fix his eye upon Christ, even as the eye of the serpent-bitten Israelite was fixed on the brazen serpent. Nothing is a more common working of self-righteousness than for the anxious inquirer to be ever looking to his own feelings, his own experiences, his own evidences as he calls them, for consolation, instead of directing his attention to Christ. He renounces dependence upon external works, but not upon internal feelings, convictions, and resolutions. It must be a great concern with the minister to lead him out of all this to Christ; to turn his eye outward instead of inward.

3. The sinner is to be told that repentance and faith are his *immediate* duty; that "*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." He is ready to admit that it is a duty to trust in Christ at some time or other, but he does not feel the obligation of it as an *immediate* duty. Many things lead him to put it off from the present moment to a future time—he does not *feel* enough—he wants to know and feel that he believes even before he does believe—he is not sufficiently convinced of sin—he can do nothing of himself—he must wait for the spirit of God—he wants to know that he is a Christian—he thinks it so solemn a thing to repent and believe, that it requires time to deliberate upon it—he is looking into himself for marks and evidences, and wishes to find in them a warrant to come to Christ—he supposes that something will turn up in his

history to tell him *when* it is time for him to believe and hope. In all these refuges of lies, running from one to the other, he is hiding himself from the duty of immediate faith. In opposition to all these pleas for delay, he is to be shewn they are the result of ignorance or the workings of self-righteousness, and he is to be pressed with the obligation of immediate surrender to God, by repentance and faith; and is to be told that faith will bring feeling, rather than feeling produce faith—that he cannot know he is a Christian, for he cannot be one, before he believes—that his warrant to come to Christ is not his own feelings of any kind, but Christ's invitation; and that this warrant is for his immediate application

4. The sinner is to be dealt with both as a rational creature, possessing all the natural faculties necessary to repentance and faith, and therefore as being capable of those states of mind, and both guilty and responsible to God for the want of them. At the same time he is to be treated as a creature that has lost all moral power, i. e., all inclination, and is thus unable, because destitute of all disposition, to repent, and is to be reminded that he is dependent upon God's sovereign mercy for the grace indispensably necessary to repentance and faith. Hence he is to be urged, under the former view of his condition, to repent and believe the Gospel—he is to be told that it is nothing but his own wicked heart that keeps him from repenting and believing, and his very pleas of inability are to be turned against him as proofs of his desperate wickedness; and yet he is to be told that nothing but divine grace, which God is under no obligation, beyond his own promise, to impart, will subdue his stubborn nature, and make him willing to repent and believe. For this grace he is to be urged immediately and earnestly to

pray, but it must at the same time be the prayer of faith, at least so far as to believe that God is willing to grant him his Holy Spirit. So that he is to give all his energies to the great work of religion, but all in dependance upon the Spirit of God, to be thus sought by importunate and believing prayer.

5. True faith, or trust in Christ, will, in every case, be followed with its appropriate fruits,—first, peace—then love—then holiness,—and that where these do not follow, there is no faith. Faith without works is dead, being alone,—i. e., it is no faith at all—and inquirers must be told that, where there is no peace, no relief of a burdened conscience, the cause of their distress is the want of faith. Instead of soothing them by referring them to their own experience, or comforting them with the idea that they are seekers after salvation, we should admonish them at once to believe the glad tidings of pardon and eternal life. Comforting men while they are in unbelief is a sad method of dealing with anxious souls.

6. These effects are to be looked for from judicious, earnest attempts to save souls, whether in what are called times of revival or on ordinary occasions. Dr. Spencer was no enemy to the use, sometimes, of extraordinary means for reviving the slumbering piety of an age or a church; but he evidently had no partiality for those periodical excitements which lead multitudes, both ministers and people, to think lightly of the ordinary means, and to expect impressive and awakening services only in the time of revival. His dependence, under God, for success, was upon the stated services of the sanctuary; and his opinion was that anything which led people or ministers to think lightly of these, and to rest their hopes upon an expected revival, was in the highest degree mischievous. And

"*the spiritual galvanism*,"—as it has been not infelicitously called,—of exciting revivalism, is pretty generally exploded by all denominations both in this country and in America, and the demand now is for a uniform healthy vigour, rather than for occasional spasmodic convulsions. It is very clear that such a system must soon wear out itself. For what is at first extraordinary, soon, by periodical repetition, becomes ordinary. The dependence of every minister for success, so far as instrumentality goes, must be upon the ordinary ministration of the Word. His *whole* ministry should be a *reviving* one. It should be his uninterrupted work to seek after the conversion of souls. Still, notwithstanding this, if at any time his church has sunk, or seems to be sinking, into a declining and lukewarm state, and he feels himself sinking with it, there is nothing irrational or unscriptural in his attempting, by some unusually solemn services, to arouse them and himself from their slumbers; to engage them to more earnest prayer; and to draw them into co-operation with him in his labours to seek the salvation of souls. I have seen the benefit of such services, and therefore cordially approve and earnestly recommend them. But then they must be of such a kind as to lead neither himself nor his flock to think lightly of the usual and regular services of the sanctuary. Nor should they be of that exciting and stimulating nature, which, by the violence of their action, is sure to be followed with exhaustion and collapse. Their tendency should be to infuse vigour into ordinary services, and give a stronger and healthier pulse to the preaching of the pastor and the piety of his church, and not by a temporary feverish excitement to enfeeble both.

Such then were the principles and methods on which Dr. Spencer acted, as will be evident from the perusal of

his pages. That *he* had extraordinary tact in this matter, we repeat, must be evident. How ready and how appropriate were his answers to the queries, his refutation of the objections, and his solution of the difficulties of those who came to him under religious concern, or whose stubborn unbelief he sought to subdue. What an enviable felicity he possessed in smoothing the way of the sinner to the cross, and guiding the wandering spirit through the labyrinth of his own perplexities to Jesus. Few may hope to possess it in the same degree, yet all who seek it may expect it in some useful measure.

In going through the cases as they are here recorded, the reader will find an occasional abruptness, harshness, and even severity of language and manner, which has the appearance of breaking the bruised reed, and looks like rough handling of the wounds of a lacerated heart. Sometimes his plainness does seem to degenerate into coarseness, and his fidelity into rudeness. Much, however, depended upon the tone and look with which his words were uttered. The same expression, which, when delivered in a bland and kindly manner, is quite inoffensive, would be harsh and repulsive when spoken in a scolding and reproachful tone. Let every one, therefore, be cautious how they imitate him in this. In his hands, this treatment was usually successful. His dealing with some cases was like that wondrous sagacity which leads eminent physicians to perceive that only desperate remedies, dangerous in less skilful hands than theirs, would do. A soft and soothing treatment would sometimes only lull the patient into a fatal lethargy. He must be roused in a manner which to him seems unkind, and perhaps put to pain in order to be cured. There are occasions when a little of this apparent severity may be of

service in dealing with inquirers after salvation. But then it must be done from a principle of love, though with a tone of seeming harshness. It would be well, in some cases, to speak with unusual plainness. I have myself often felt justified in telling persons that I thought them totally wrong, and altogether without true godliness and knowledge of the way of salvation. I hope I know enough of the gospel and of human nature to know that the cords of love are the bands of a man, and that the apostle speaks of his having been gentle among his converts as a nurse cherisheth her children; but in dealing with souls we must not use flattering words, and lull to a fatal slumber where we ought to rouse to a sense of danger.

Dr. Spencer knew how to introduce the subject of religion, without at once rousing prejudice and closing the avenues of the soul against instruction and further attempts for the salvation of those with whom he conversed. Some beautiful instances of his skill in this way will come out in the following pages. I have known well-meaning men in the ministry, who were so abrupt, not to say offensive, in speaking to persons about religion, that instead of engaging attention and awakening solicitude, they inspired disgust and contempt. This repulsive manner is not unfrequently mistaken for fidelity, but true faithfulness combines prudence, affection, and courtesy with zeal. The subject of religion, to an unconverted person, is itself sufficiently distasteful, and should not be rendered more so by the rude, coarse, and offensive manner by which it is introduced. There is no topic on which those who are under real concern about their spiritual welfare are, in many cases at least, less disposed to talk than upon their religious feelings. Violently, then, to break into the

temple of the heart, and rudely to rifle its most sacred treasures, is an offence at once against good taste and Christian discretion. It does require the greatest delicacy on the part of those who would do good in the way of individual conversation, not to wound the sensibilities of the timid and sensitive mind. Not that, by these remarks, I am undoing all I have attempted to do in this introduction. I still say that it must be, if we would carry out the design of our mission, one great part of our duty to individualize, as far as we can, our hearers, and labour, by direct personal intercourse, to promote their eternal salvation. There is nothing in this at all analagous to the tyranny over conscience, to the officious meddling with the secrets of the soul, the revolting intrusion into the sanctuary of the heart, practised by the sacerdotal spy in the dark recesses of the confessional. What I ask and contend for is merely that conversation with individuals in our congregations, which it might be well supposed, ought to be maintained between the teacher and the taught, and which shall aid the latter in acquiring that knowledge of the way of salvation on which hang their eternal destinies.

I see no peculiarity in the constitution of society in America which should render Dr. Spencer's method more applicable to that country than to our own. It might be thought, perhaps, by some that the republican form of government has so far diffused its spirit through the general habits of the people as to place them more upon an equality with each other, and thus to render such personal address more easy. There is but little, if any, weight in this. There is as much refinement of feeling, as much personal respect for one another, on the other side of the Atlantic as there is on ours. Let it be for

ever ignored as an opinion, that there is anything discourteous, anything at war with true politeness, on the part of a minister, who, even without being addressed first on the subject of religion by any one of his own congregation, shall, in a respectful manner and on a befitting occasion, introduce the subject.

My brethren in the ministry will not I hope deem me suspicious of either their fidelity or devotedness, nor reproach me as officious and presuming, if in conclusion of this introduction I exhort them to review afresh the great object of their vocation, and to inquire into their manner of discharging its duties. In an age like the present when so many *secondary* objects are coming forward into notice—such as an improved system of ministerial education, and a more elegant and tasteful style of ecclesiastical architecture—and when matters of such absorbing interest in the departments of science and the arts, politics and commerce, indeed in all the spheres of human activity, are rising up to captivate and possess the public mind, thus drawing off its attention from things unseen and eternal—there needs a new and an intense devotedness on the part of our pastors; and yet without great and earnest care there is a danger of there being less. A trumpet call, infinitely louder than any I can send forth, is necessary to summon us all to our post of labour with renewed self-consecration. Pastoral responsibilities cannot be an ordinary thing at any time, much less in such a time as this—and cannot, must not, be taken coolly. Our office is either the wildest extravagance, or it is the most solemn and weighty of human thoughts. What we need then, I repeat, is a fresh unction from heaven; a new baptism of the Spirit; a new impulse of “the powers of the

world to come;" a yearning over souls; a wrestling with God, if not with the blood, yet with the tears of Gethsemane—that we may know how to wring out from this time and this land, and this strangely agitated people, salvation. I am not an enemy to literature in the ministry, except when the learning of Athens and Rome eclipses that of Jerusalem; nor to science, if it be not atheistically mad, nor sceptically vain, nor incorrigibly perverse, and doating on its oppositions to the Father of Lights; nor to philosophy, except it be that which is falsely so called, and is both vain and deceitful. As I have already said, I am no advocate for pious imbecility or reverend incompetency. Even seraphic piety, if combined with ignorance, is no meetness of itself for the pulpit. "What has ignorance to do in the sacred office? Just as much as sin—I had almost said—and no more. God is not the patron of darkness. He has none in his own nature, and next his altars there should be perpetual light. A minister of Christ is expressed emphatically by the metaphor of a *star*. And why? Obviously because he is appropriately a luminary to the world." All this is admitted; but by another metaphor he is called "*a flame of fire*," of which its *heat* and energy are the points of resemblance, rather than its *light*. Yes; the ministry needed for these times is one possessed of a burning energy of soul, and not merely a ministry learned and philosophical; but one which, whatever be its attainments—and the greater the better—will carry learning, philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, and everything else, as so much fuel to increase the intensity of that fire, and make its operation more efficient, which burns in the soul of a man melting with the love of souls and constrained by the love of Christ.

All my experience as a preacher and a pastor for fifty years, connected with some extensive observation and special opportunities, deepen in my soul every way the conviction of the cardinal importance of a ministry, **RICHLY, ABLY, AND ABUNDANTLY SCRIPTURAL IN ITS CHARACTER.** It is on this we expect the dew of heaven to fall in its richness. It is here that we expect the blessing, even life for evermore.

To an intense desire after the conversion of souls, carried on with diligence and in a scriptural manner in the pulpit and out of it, we should add, if we would ever succeed, *a most tender and affectionate disposition.* What an example of this have we in the apostle Paul, who to a giant's mind united a woman's heart. "*Remember,*" said he, in addressing the elders of the Ephesian church, "*that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*" Oh, those tears! which seem to contain a whole body of christian theology, christian morality, and christian experience. Next to the tears of his great Master, shed over Jerusalem, they might affect us more than any tears ever dropped on our cold hard earth. And both together, the tears of Jesus and of his servant Paul teach us that one of the qualifications of a good minister of Christ is a tender affectionate heart, and that one of the fittest occasions of his tears is the condition of impenitent sinners. Let us for a moment dwell on Paul's words—"For the space of three years"—what a contribution! three years out of thirty to a single church!—so much for the *time*. "I warned"—earnestly, solemnly entreated and besought men to be reconciled to God—so much for the *manner* and *matter* of his ministry. "Day and night"—whether refreshed or fatigued, in season and out of season—so much for *opportunity*. "I ceased not"

—without intermission or interruption—so much for *perseverance*. “Every one”—not only the ministers, but the members of the Ephesian church; not only the members collectively, but individually; not only after conversion but before;—so much for *persons*. “With tears”—so much for *charity*. “What a multitude of tears must Paul have shed in his time. What a victim to emotion must have been the martyr spirit of this flaming herald of the cross; for it is *manly* to weep where there is occasion for weeping. The sensibilities of the heart, duly excited, are a fragrant atmosphere investing the soul, and shedding its soft and balmy dews on all its powers. They are the silver tissues that are woven into the delicate but immortal texture of the mind.”*

Let the ministry learn, then, of how much importance is a tender heart and weeping eye, combined with, and controlled by, a vigorous and manly intellect. Our aim must be to make men feel as well as think; and the old Latin writer on eloquence teaches us that to make others feel we must feel ourselves. And then what an example and recommendation of the individual attention to anxious and inquiring souls, as set forth in this volume, does the conduct of the great apostle at Ephesus place before us. He not only “disputed and taught publicly in the school of Tyrannus, but ceased not to warn *every one*,” as another part of his address tells us, “*from house to house*.” Dr. Spencer did but imitate Paul, when he followed home his hearers to their own habitations. Let us imitate both. Let us with all tenderness, judgment, and diligence, search out in private the cases that need our attention. Let us remember the rebuke given by God to the shepherds of the ancient church—“The diseased

* Adolphe Monod’s “Sermon on the Christianity of Paul’s Tears.”

have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick ; neither bound up that which was broken ; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away ; nor sought that which was lost."

My brethren will forgive me, I hope, if I suggest that there is amongst us all—if we look at the stupendous truths and momentous objects of our ministry—a criminal supineness and a lamentable deficiency of the burning zeal which should characterize our activity. Amidst the hurry of our work in this age of bustling energy, we have too little leisure to reflect upon our mission, and inquire into the manner in which we are fulfilling its requirements and terrible responsibilities. A time of seclusion, when sickness of a serious nature dismisses us from the pulpit and the study, and shuts us up in the chamber of solitude, and leaves us alone with our conscience, is sometimes granted to us as an opportunity of self-conference, and offers to us a befitting opportunity for a fresh survey of our work, and for a solemn scrutiny into our means of executing it. Ah, then, when the hours pass slowly away, and the time is occupied between solemn recollections of the past, and still more solemn anticipations of the future ; when actions are scanned and motives are weighed ; when it seems probable that all stewardship is over, except the account to be rendered to the Great Master, and when the audit is looked for as very near, then how differently do we judge of the momentous importance and responsibility of the ministerial office, to what we do while busily engaged in its various functions. How really awful a thing does it then appear to us to watch for souls, and to give account of the manner in which we have performed our duties. Such, as is well known, has been my situation of late. The hand of God arrested me in the midst of my

labours, and sent me to my chamber, where, in days of weakness and in nights of sleeplessness, I reviewed a ministry not altogether inactive, nor unprofitable, and which has been protracted beyond the ordinary length of service; and oh, how clearly and impressively did the great object of the ministry, as designed for the salvation of souls, come out upon me anew. How worthless, in those somewhat awful moments, did all other ends—compared with this—appear to my mind. How deeply humbled did I feel under the conviction of the imperfect manner in which this great object had been sought; and how full was my determination, should my life be longer spared, to make this the great and only object of my remaining days. It seemed to me then, as I have expressed it elsewhere, as if we were all loiterers together in the vineyard of the Lord, and as though “a workman that needed not to be ashamed” was rarely to be found, since Whitfield and Wesley have gone to their rest.

I am still in circumstances calculated to give solemnity to my reflections, and perhaps some weight to my words. The pressure of disease upon my bodily frame has been lightened, but it has left me no longer “strong to labour.” I am on the verge of old age, and the subject of not a few of its infirmities. The evening of life is come, and with it some of its clouds. Should these clouds, however, only furnish a new theatre on which to display the lustre of my setting sun, and afford me an opportunity of glorifying Christ by the passive virtues of the Christian character, they ought to be more welcome than even a clearer sky. It is now some consolation to me to recollect that amidst innumerable defects—which, if affection has concealed them from the notice of my friends, are humbly known to myself—I have in some measure

ever kept in view the conversion of sinners as the great end of the Christian ministry, and therefore of mine. I started in my preaching career, while yet a student, with this before my eyes, as the great purpose for which I entered the pulpit. This I have kept in view through a ministry of half a century. This I now look at, with undiverted eye, in the latter scenes of my life; and, taught both by my own experience, and by observation of all I have seen in the conduct of others, were I now beginning my course instead of gradually closing it, I should most deliberately choose this as my ministerial vocation, and consider that my official life would be almost a lost adventure if this were not in some good measure its blessed result. In the pursuit of this object, notwithstanding all my defects and manifold imperfections, I have had my reward. I speak thus, not in a way of boasting, but of gratitude, and for the encouragement of my brethren in the ministry, especially its younger members. God will never suffer those altogether to fail in their object who make the conversion of souls their great aim, and who employ in earnestness of prayer and action his own methods, and depend upon his own Spirit for accomplishing it.

Ministers may think too little of this now, and the work of conversion be lost sight of too much, in their eager desires and ardent ambition after popularity and applause; but the time is coming when these, except as they gave a man a wider sphere for his converting work, will be thought worthless and vain. Amidst the gathering infirmities of old age, and the anticipations of eternity—much more at the bar of Christ, and in the celestial world—it will be deemed a poor and meagre reflection to a minister of Christ, that he was once followed and ap-

plauded by admiring crowds. The knowledge then that he had been the instrument of converting a single sinner from the error of his ways, and saving a soul from death, will be worth more than the applauses of a world or the admiration of an age; and is an honour for which the crown of royalty or the wreath of victory might be bartered now with infinite advantage. Then amidst the scenes of the last judgment, and the splendours of immortality, they who have been most eager in seeking, and most successful in obtaining, the richest distinctions upon earth, shall confess that "HE WHO WINNETH SOULS IS WISE," and shall see "THAT THEY WHO TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL SHINE AS THE STARS FOR EVER AND EVER."

J. A. J.

P.S.—It is but candid to state that I have omitted some of the Sketches contained in Dr. Spencer's work, as being less likely to be interesting and useful than those which I have selected. I was anxious, not unnecessarily, to swell the bulk and increase the price of this volume.

A PASTOR'S SKETCHES,

BY

I. S. SPENCER, D.D.

Faith Everything.

AMONG a large number of young people, who, at one time, were in the habit of meeting me every week, for the purpose of personal conversation on the subject of religion, there was a very quiet, contemplative young woman, whose candor and simplicity of heart interested me very much. She did not appear to me, to be susceptible of much impulsive emotion, but to be very much a child of thought. Her convictions of sin, which appeared to me to be deep and clear, were uniformly expressed more in the language of reason than of emotion; so that I sometimes feared, that she had only an ordinary and intellectual conviction, without much real discovery of her character as a sinner against God. In addition to all the conversation I could have with her in the presence of others, I often visited her at her own home. And because of her apparent destitution of any deep emotions, and my consequent fear that her convictions were more speculative than real, I laboured to unfold to her the character of God, his Law, the nature of sin, the state of her own heart; and aimed to impress truths of this kind upon her feelings and conscience. She assented to it all.—I urged upon her the necessity of immediate repentance, her lost condition as a sinner, and her indispensable necessity of the atoning blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, to save her from merited condemnation. She assented to all this.—I explained to her, again and again, the whole way of salvation for sinners, the grace of God, and the willingness of Christ to save her. She said she believed it all.—I cautioned her against resisting the Holy Spirit, by unbelief, by prayerlessness, by delaying her repentance and her fleeing to Christ; and

in every mode that my thoughts could devise, I tried to lead her to the gospel salvation. But it all seemed to be ineffectual. She remained apparently in the same state of mind. Thus she continued for several weeks. She gained nothing, and lost nothing. Studious of her Bible, prayerful, attentive to all the means of grace, she was still without peace, and still manifested no additional anxiety, and no disposition to discontinue her attempts to attain salvation. For a time, there had been with her manifestly an increasing solemnity and depth of seriousness; but this time had gone by; and she remained, to all appearance, fixed in the same unchanging state of mind.

Such was her condition, when I visited her again, without much expectation of any good to result from anything I could say. After many inquiries, and trying all my skill to ascertain, if possible, whether there was any vital religious truth which she did not understand, or any sin which she was not willing to abandon; I said to her plainly:—"Mary, I can do you no good! I have said to you everything appropriate to your state, that I can think of. I would aid you most willingly, if I could; but I can do you no good."

"I do not think you can," said she calmly; "but I hope you will still come to see me."

"Yes, I will," said I. "But all I can say to you is, *I know* there is salvation for you; but you must repent, you must flee to Christ."

We went from her house directly to the evening lecture. I commenced the service, by reading the Hymn of Dr. Watts:—

There is a voice of sovereign grace
Sounds from the sacred word;
"Ho! ye despairing sinners come
And trust upon the Lord."

My soul obeys the almighty call,
And runs to this relief;
I would believe thy promise, Lord,
Oh! help my unbelief.

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all!

This hymn was sung, and the service conducted in the usual manner. I forgot all about Mary, as an individual, and preached as appropriately as I was able, to the congregation before me.

The next day she came to me to tell me, that she "had made a new discovery."

"Well," said I, "what is it that you have discovered?"

"Why, Sir," said she, "the way of salvation all seems to me now perfectly plain. My darkness is all gone. I see now what I never saw before."

"Do you see that you have given up *sin* and the world? and given your whole heart to Christ?"

"I do not think that I am a Christian; but I have never been *so happy* before. All is light to me now. I see my way clear; and I am not burdened and troubled as I was."

"And how is this? what has brought you to this state of mind?"

"I do not know *how* it is, or what has brought me to it. But when you were reading that hymn last night, I saw the whole way of salvation for sinners perfectly plain, and wondered that I had never seen it before. I saw that I had nothing to do, but to *trust* in Christ:

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall.

I sat all the evening, just looking at that hymn. I did not hear your prayer. I did not hear a word of your sermon. I do not know your text. I thought of nothing but that hymn; and I have been thinking of it ever since. It is so light, and makes me so contented. Why, sir," (said she, in the perfect simplicity of her heart, never thinking that she was repeating what had been told her a thousand times,) "*don't you think that the reason why we do not get out of darkness sooner, is, that we don't believe?*"

"Just that, Mary,—precisely that. Faith in Jesus Christ to save is the way to heaven."

The idea had not yet occurred to her mind, that she was a Christian. She had only *discovered the way*. I did not think it wise for me to suggest the idea to her at all, but

leave her to the direction of the Holy Spirit and the truth of the hymn. If the Holy Spirit had given her a new heart, I trusted he would lead her to hope, as soon as he wanted her to hope. The hymn which had opened her eyes, was the best truth for her to meditate at present.

I conversed with her for some time. She had no more troubles, no darkness, no difficulties. All was clear to her mind, and she rejoiced in the unexpected discovery she had made. "I now *know what to do*," said she; "I must trust in Jesus Christ; and I believe God will enable me to do so."

It was not till after the lapse of some days, that she began to hope,—that she had really become reconciled to God. But she finally came to the conclusion that her religion commenced when she sat, that evening, pondering that hymn, and wondering she "had never discovered before, that sinners must *believe*."

She afterwards became a communicant in the church; and to the day of her death, so far as I have been able to ascertain, she lived as a *believer*.

This case has suggested to my mind the inquiry, whether, as ministers, after all our preaching upon faith, we do not fail to insist directly upon it as we ought, and tell inquirers, as Mary told me, "we have nothing to do but to trust." I deem it not improbable, that by the extensive and labored explanations we give, the minds of inquirers are often confused; and the very way we take to make religion plain, is the very means of making it obscure; and that Mary's simplicity of faith would be a far better sermon for many such persons. All the matter of a soul's closing with Christ may be wrapped up in a very little space,—may be a very simple thing. And what that thing is, the Holy Spirit seems to have taught Mary, "we have nothing to do but to trust."

Simplicity of Faith.

THE simplicity of faith was once illustrated to me in another, and a very different manner.

I was preaching my ordinary weekly lecture in the evening ; when I was sent for in great haste, to visit a woman who was said to be dying, and who very much desired to see me. I closed the service, as soon as I could, and went immediately to her house. She was a member of my church, whom I had known very well, for years ; with whom I had been acquainted ever since her first serious impressions, before she became a communicant. As I entered the room where she lay, I found it filled with her friends, who had gathered around her to see her die. Making my way through the midst of them, I reached the side of her bed, and found her apparently in the last agonies of death. She was bolstered up in her bed, gasping for breath, almost suffocated by the asthma ; and the whole bed shook by a palpitation of her heart, which seemed to be shaking her to pieces. It appeared to me, that she could not live the quarter of an hour. I said to her,—

“Mrs M., you seem to be very sick?”

“Yes,” said she, “I am dying.”

“And are you ready to die?”

She lifted her eyes upon me, with a solemn and fixed gaze, and speaking with great difficulty, she replied :—

“Sir, God knows—I have taken him—at his word—and—I am not afraid—to die.”

It was a new definition of faith. “I have taken him at his word.” It struck me in an instant as a triumph of faith. “God knows I have taken him at his word, and I am not afraid to die.” It was just the thing for her to

say. I have often tried to think, what else she could have said, that would have expressed so much, in such few words.

I prayed some four minutes, by her bed-side, recited to her some passages of God's word, and was about to leave her, for a moment, to her friends, whom she seemed anxious to address. She held me by the hand; and uttering a word at a time, as she gasped for breath, she said to me:—

“I wanted to tell you—that I can—trust—in God—while—I am dying.—You have—often told me—he would not—forsake me.—And now—I find it true.—I am—at peace.—I die—willingly—and happy.”

In a few minutes, I left her, uttering to her such promises of the Saviour as I deemed most appropriate.—However, she did not die. She still lives. But that expression of her faith has been of great benefit to me. It has aided me in preaching, and in conversation with inquiring sinners very often. It gave me a more simple idea of faith, than I ever had before. It put aside all the mist of metaphysics, speculation, and philosophising. It made the whole nature of faith plain. Everybody could understand it:—“God knows, I have taken him at his word.”

If I am not mistaken, many of the speculations about faith have no tendency to *invite* faith. Rather the contrary. The speculations tend to throw over the exercises of faith an obscurity—tend to give them a dimness and distance, which make them too uncertain and too far off, for either clearness or comfort. We cannot afford to take such long journeys, and through such intricate windings. The Bible never asks us to do it. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” This is all clear; “nigh thee.” It is God's word. Speculations cannot improve it. Explanations cannot make it invite faith, only as they make its simplicity understood.

Many of the published dissertations, on the nature and philosophy of the atonement, may be deep, but they are dark. We cannot afford to travel along such weary distances, and through such twilight paths, in order to get at the fact—at what it *is*, that we are to believe, and trust in. The Bible puts it directly before us;—"slain for us—the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We are asked to receive it, just on God's testimony: not by the aids of philosophy, but on the declaration of the fact. We "make God a liar," if we do not "believe the testimony, which he hath given us of his Son." We must take it *on God's declaration*. That is faith. The speculations may be useful to silence scepticism; but they never soften hearts. They may make us scholars; but they never make us children, or lead us home. The atonement satisfies God. He says so. That is enough. Leave it there. Men may try; but they will try in vain, when they attempt to convert the weapons for defending against infidelity, into bread to feed God's hungry children. We must "take God at his word." The philosophy of religion, is just faith: nothing more.

Many of our treatises on the subjects of faith, (having a kind of Germanizing about them—a kind of crazy philosophizing), are so filled up with explanations, and labored justifications, and attempted analogies; that they have more tendency to awaken doubt, than call forth faith. They have just the effect to make the reader believe that the authors are not themselves quite certain of *the thing*, since they take so much pains to demonstrate, explain, and *justify* it. They appear to go back of God's word, and invite other people to go along with them, as if God's word needed the props of their philosophy. This is no aid to faith. Let us "take God at his word." No philosophy can prop up a divine promise: or build a scaffolding to reach it.—Some of our Theologians, having a kind of German baptism, are more likely to make infidels, than make Christians. The same thing may be said of a great deal of modern religious literature—filled with philosophy, "falsely so called."

Waiting for the Holy Spirit.

NEARLY twenty years have now passed away, since I became acquainted with the individual, of whom I am now to speak. I was called upon to preach, in connection with other ministers of the gospel, in a large village, and during the continuance of what was denominated a "protracted meeting." These meetings had this designation from the fact, that they were continued from day to day, for several successive days. The exercises usually consisted, in that part of the country, of preaching in the morning, afternoon and evening, with meetings for prayer and religious inquiry, before or after sermon. The sermons were usually preached by those ministers settled in his vicinity, whom the minister of the church where the meeting was held, had invited for that purpose. At one of these meetings, I preached a sermon on the influences of the Holy Spirit. It was a time of revival in the church; and the truths of the gospel, preached at such a time, when the Spirit of God was poured out, and when people were peculiarly attentive and solemn, were not likely to be entirely forgotten, even by those who were mere hearers of the word.

Some months after this, as I entered the same village again, on my way from a similar meeting in an adjoining parish, I beheld a crowd of people entering the Town Hall. I inquired the reason, and was told there was "a religious meeting there, that evening, probably a prayer meeting." I gave my horse into the charge of the hostler at the tavern, and without waiting for tea, mingled with the crowd, and entered the hall. Having already preached three times that day, and conversed with numbers who were seeking the Lord, I was too much

wearied to think of doing anything more; and therefore endeavoured to keep out of the sight of the clergyman, by taking a back seat, and leaning down my head. My attempt was in vain. He discovered me, and requested me to come forward to the desk. I preached a short sermon, the people dispersed, and I went with the clergyman to his home.

We were not seated in the parlour, before a servant entered, and said, a lady in the hall wished to see me. I immediately stepped into the hall, and a very genteel woman, about forty years of age, addressed me, with evident agitation:—

“I beg your pardon for troubling you to-night, Sir, but I cannot help it. I have longed to see you ever since you preached here in August. I have often felt that I would give *anything* to see you, for even five minutes. I have prayed for that privilege. And when I saw you in the town hall to-night, I was so rejoiced that I could hardly remain in my seat; and I determined to follow you when you went out, till I got a chance to speak with you.”

“I am very glad to see you, Madam; but I suspect you have taken all this trouble in vain.”

“Why, Sir, cannot you talk with me one minute? cannot you answer me one question?” said she, her eyes overflowing with tears.

“Certainly, certainly, Madam; I can talk with you as long as you please to favour me with your company, and will answer any questions you choose to ask, as well as I can; but I suspect you need an aid which I cannot give you.”

“Sir, I want only one thing of you. I want you to tell me how I shall procure the Holy Spirit. I have wanted to ask you this question for months. If you will only tell me, I will not intrude myself upon you any longer.”

(Entirely overcome with her emotions, she wept like a child.)

“*Intrude!* my dear lady. This is no intrusion. I am

glad to see you. I thank you, with all my heart, for coming to me. I beg you to do me the justice to believe it, and feel yourself perfectly at ease. Ask me anything, or tell me anything you will, with entire freedom. I will not abuse your confidence."

She stood before me, trembling and weeping, as if her heart would break. And as she aimed to repress her emotions, and removed her handkerchief from her eyes, the light of the hall-lamp shone full upon her face, and I was surprised at the deep solemnity and determination, which appeared in one of the most intelligent and beautiful countenances, that I ever beheld.

At this instant the lady of the house, perceiving the nature of our conversation, invited us into a private room. My new acquaintance told me who she was, and repeated the cause of her calling upon me. I asked her some questions, and conversed with her for some minutes, for the purpose of ascertaining more exactly the state of her mind, and adapting my words accordingly. Her intelligence and the elegance of her language surprised me. She was in middle life, a married woman, having a husband still living, and two small children. Her husband was not a pious man; and her thoughts about her own salvation had led her to think much of his, and of the duty she owed to her children. Her first serious impressions arose from the thought, that, not being a member of the church, she could not dedicate her children to God in the ordinance of baptism; and this led her to think, that in her unbelief she could not fitly train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

"Oh! Sir," said she; (the tears streaming from her eyes, and her sensations almost choking utterance;) "I would give all the world to be a Christian! I know I am a sinner, an undone sinner! I have a vile and wicked heart. I have sinned all my life! I wonder God has spared me so long!"

"But he *has* spared you, Madam; when you did not

deserve it. And what has he spared you for, but that you should repent of sin and flee to Christ for pardon?"

"I would repent, if I could. I want to be a Christian. But my hard, wicked heart is stronger than I! For years I have read my Bible, and struggled and prayed; and it has done me no good! I am afraid I shall be cast off for ever! God has not given me his Spirit!"

"I too am afraid you will be cast off for ever! Probably your danger is greater, than you think! But there is mercy in Christ for the chief of sinners. His blood cleanseth from—"

"I know it, Sir; I know all that from my Bible. I have read it a thousand times. But I cannot *come* to Christ without the Holy Spirit."

"Madam, the text is plain, 'if ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to—'"

"But I am *not* one of his children, Sir."

"The text does not say, *to his children*, my dear Madam; it says, '*to them that ask him.*' 'Ask and ye shall receive.'"

"Oh! I *have* prayed—I *do* pray."

"Allow me to ask you, Madam, how long you have been in this state of mind?"

"About three years. I was first brought to think of my salvation, soon after the birth of my first child; when my duty to my family led me to feel the need of religion. I could not have it baptized, for I was not a member of the church;* and what troubled me more, I could not do my duty to it, for I was not a child of God."

"And have you been accustomed, for so long a time, to read your Bible carefully?"

"Oh! I have read it all, again and again! I read it daily. I have prayed and wept over this subject, for long *years*! and have waited for the Holy Spirit to renew my heart."

* It is a principle held by *some* ministers, that no child should be baptised, except one of the parents, at least, is a member.

"And have you been waiting for the Holy Spirit for three years, in this state of mind?"

"Indeed, Sir, I have."

"Then, for *three years you have been waiting* for what God *gave you three years ago*. It was the Holy Spirit which first led you to feel you were a sinner and needed Christ. The Holy Spirit has been striving with you all along, and you did not know it. He led you to the Bible. He led you to prayer. He sent you here to night. He strives with you *now*, to lead you to Christ for forgiveness and peace."

"Do you think *so*?" said she with astonishment.

"I *know so*," said I. "God has been better to you, than you have thought. He has done what you have never given him credit for. He has called and you have refused. He has invited, and you have held back. You thought you must not come, and could not. You may, on the spot. The Holy Spirit has not left you yet. I wonder that he has not; but you have another call to-night. And now, Madam, accept his invitation; repent; take Christ as your Saviour. Go home and give your heart to God, just as it is. You cannot make it better. The Holy Spirit is with you. Do not resist him any longer. You have stayed away from Christ, because you supposed you must. You wanted the Holy Spirit *first*; and thought you must not come to Christ, till your heart was better. The dispensation of the Spirit is in his hands. Go to the fountain. The Bible nowhere tells you to *wait* for the Holy Spirit; but, fleeing to Christ, to depend on his aid *now*."

"Pardon me, Sir, I must ask you again, if you really think, the Holy Spirit is striving with me?"

"Yes, my dear friend, I *know* he is. He has been for years. He offers you his aid. He calls you to Christ now. Go to Christ. Repent to-night. Accept and rest on Christ now. The Holy Ghost saith, 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.'"

"And is that all you have to say to me, about the Holy Spirit?"

"Yes, that is *all*. The Holy Spirit this moment strives with you. God is willing to save you. Nothing but your own unbelief and impenitence can ruin you."

"Has the Spirit been striving with me?—and I did not know it?" (said she, in the manner of meditation, the tears streaming from her eyes.)—

She left me, and returned to her home.

Early the next morning, before the sun rose, as I looked from my window, I beheld her coming through the thick dew which lay upon the grass, with hasty steps ascending the hill, on which the house where I lodged was situated. She asked for me at the door, and I immediately met her in the parlour.

"I thank you, my dear friend, I thank you a thousand times for telling me that;" (said she, the moment she saw me; her eyes streaming with tears and her countenance beaming with joy.) "It was all true. I have found it true. I can rejoice in Christ now. I am happy, Sir, oh, I am happy. I thought I *must* come and thank you. I am afraid you will think me rude, in calling upon you at such an hour. But I was afraid you would be gone, if I delayed; and I could not allow you to leave the town without telling you how happy I am, and how much I thank you. After I heard you preach, three months since, I thought you could tell me something about obtaining the gift of the Holy Spirit, and when I asked you about it last night, I was very much disappointed by what you said. I was amazed and confounded. You did not say what I expected. But I *believed* you. I spent the night over the subject. Happy night for me! And now, I *know* you told me the truth. You read my heart rightly. I bless God for what I have found. Pardon me, Sir; I *must* ask you, to tell other sinners, that Christ is waiting for them. They do not know it, I am sure, any more than I did; or they would go to him. The Holy Spirit calls us to do so. With all my glad heart, I yield to him. I do not wait any longer. I bless you for telling me, I need not wait."

Weeping for joy, she continued to talk to me in this manner, for some minutes.

I have not seen her since. But I have learned, that she publicly professed her faith, and has lived for years, as a reputable and happy believer.

Probably the influences of the Holy Spirit are more common with impenitent sinners, than they suppose. Such persons greatly err, when, instead of fleeing at once to Christ; they wait, and think they *must* wait for some attainment first. Their waiting for it, is but a deceptive excuse; and if they suppose they have gained any attainment and on that ground Christ has accepted them; their religion is only self-righteousness and delusion. A broken heart is invited to the balm of Gilead. "Tell other sinners that Christ is waiting for them."

The subtlety of the adversary is wonderful. The want of the Holy Spirit was this woman's obstacle. The devil had led her to believe, that she was forsaken of the Spirit; and if she was, she knew from the Bible, that there was no other help for her. Instead of going to Christ, therefore, in faith, she miserably supposed, that she must wait. She did not know, that the very urgency and influence of the Holy Spirit consist in bringing sinners to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel. The very thing that God wanted her to do, was the very thing that she supposed she must *not* do; and thus she was compelled to wait in darkness and fear by a subtle device of the adversary.—It is important for convicted sinners to know, that the cause of their irreligion is *not*, that Christ is not willing to receive them, but that they are not willing to trust in him.

Waiting for Conviction.

THERE was a young woman in my congregation at one time, about whom I felt no little interest, and had for a long time sought an opportunity to speak with her alone, on the subject of religion. I had spoken to her more than once, sometimes in the presence of her mother, and sometimes before some other member of the family. But she was very reserved. She seemed entirely disinclined to any conversation on the subject. Her taciturnity was so constant, that I could only ask questions, and she answered only in monosyllables, or not all. I had some acquaintance with her as a neighbour and friend, but little as a minister. She appeared to me to possess more than an ordinary share of intellect and amiability. I had often noticed that she gave strict attention to my sermons. But, though many others, some among her acquaintance, and some in her own family, had then recently become, (as we hoped,) the children of God; yet she never manifested any special concern. When I thought of her good sense, her candour, her kindness of feeling, and her sobriety, I was surprised that she did not seek God. She was now passing by the first years of her youth, and it pained me to think that they were gone, and that she was now entering the years of her womanhood, a stranger to Christ. I resolved to see her in private, and aim to overcome that obstinate taciturnity which I despaired of overcoming in the presence of any other person, and which, as I supposed, hindered me from perceiving the real state of her mind, and knowing what to say to her.

I called at her house and asked for her. But, as she and her mother, both at the same time, entered the room.

where I was, I was obliged to say to her mother that I desired to see her daughter alone, if she would be so kind as to grant me that privilege. "Oh, *certainly*," said she, and left the room, manifestly disconcerted, if not displeased.

I immediately said to the daughter, "I am always happy to see your mother; but I called this morning on purpose to see you alone."

"I knew you asked for *me*," said she; "but mother would come in; she always *will*, when you ask for me. I don't know why it is, but she always seems to be unwilling to have you see me alone."

"And did you wish to see me alone?"

"Not *particularly*; but mother and I are such great *talkers*, that you will find one of us at a time quite enough."

"Do you call yourself a great talker?" said I.

"Oh yes, they say I am; and I suppose it is true."

"Well, will you talk with *me*? I have called on purpose to talk with you on the subject of your religion, if you will allow me that privilege."

She was mute. She cast her eyes downwards, and seemed confused.

"I hope you will not consider me intrusive," said I, "or impertinent; but I have long felt a deep interest in you, and have desired an opportunity to converse with you freely and confidentially about your religious duty."

"I did not know that you ever thought of me."

"Then certainly I have need to beg your pardon," said I. "I must have treated you very impolitely if you did not know that I ever thought of you."

"Oh, *no*, sir; you have never treated me impolitely."

"And certainly I never *will*. But permit me to ask you, are you willing to converse with me about your own religion?"

"I have got no religion," said she, with a downcast and solemn look.

"And do you mean always to live without it? and die without it?"

She made me no answer. I paused for an answer, as long as I thought I could, without embarrassing her feelings; but no answer came. I continued:—

“You say you have got no religion. Would it not be wise and well for you to attend to that subject; and aim to attain a religion that will secure to you the favour of God and everlasting life?”

She made me no answer. After another pause, I said: “You think of this subject I suppose, sometimes?”

She made no reply.

“My dear girl,” said I earnestly, “I did not come here to embarrass you, or annoy you in any manner. I love you, and wish to do you good; but, if you prefer it, I will leave you, at once. I will not intrude myself upon you, or intrude upon your attention a subject to which you do not wish to lend your mind.”

“Why, Sir,” said she, “I am glad to see you.”

“Why, then, will you not talk with me?”

“Indeed, Sir, I do not know what to say.”

“Pardon me, my dear girl; I do not wish to embarrass you, or blame you; but certainly you *could* answer me some of the questions I have asked. And now allow me to ask you again; do you think much on the subject of religion? or have you any concern about it?”

She made me no answer. After a painful but brief pause, I continued:—

“I beg you to speak to me. Say anything you think or feel. I assure you I have no feelings towards you, but those of kindness and respect. I *will* treat you politely and kindly. But, my child, your silence embarrasses me. I am afraid to say another word, lest I should hurt your feelings. You might deem another question an impertinence.”

“You may *ask* me,” said she, with a forced smile.

“Then,” said I, “are you giving any serious or prayerful attention to religion?”

“No, Sir, not at present.”

“I thank you for the answer. But let me ask; do you

not think that you *ought* to attend to it, earnestly and prayerfully, and without delay?"

She did not answer, but appeared quite confused. The blood mounted to her cheeks. I pitied her.

"Believe me," said I, "I do not mean to confuse you; but why do you not speak to me, and tell me your feelings plainly and freely? And I will hold all that you say, as confidential as you please to make it."

"Well, Sir, *I will*. But I know you will not like it."

"No matter for that," said I.

"I do not wish to oppose *you*; but *I* do not think it would do any good for me to attend to religion, with my present feelings."

"Pray, what do you mean? I do not understand you."

"I mean," said she, "that I have no particular anxiety about religion, and I do not believe it would do any good for me to attend to religion, till I have some greater anxiety about it."

"And are you *waiting* for such an anxiety?"

"Certainly, I am."

"Do you expect to get it by *waiting*? Do you think it will ever *come* to you?"

"I do not know, indeed," said she, very sadly; "I used to hope so; but I have waited for it a long time."

"Does the Bible tell you to wait for it?"

"I do not know, as it *tells* me to wait. But it speaks of conviction, of broken and contrite hearts; and Christian people speak of awakenings, alarms, and distresses of mind, and influences of the Holy Spirit, with those who are led to religion. And you preach such things; as if these were the beginning. And if I have none of these, how *can* I begin to seek God?"

"Did you ever hear me preach, that one should *wait* for these?"

"Yes."

"No, *never*! my child."

"Yes I have, I am sure."

"*Never, never*! I preach nothing like it."

"I remember your *text*, Sir, and you always preach the text: 'On thee do I wait all the day.'"

"Yes, and in that sermon I told you, that waiting *on* God was one thing, and waiting *for* God was quite another. The first was right, and the last was wrong. We wait *on* him by such things as prayer. Did I not tell you so?"

"Yes, Sir, you did."

"And do you pray?"

"No."

"Then you do not obey my sermon, and wait *on* God."

"How can I, with no conviction?"

"How do you expect to get conviction?"

"I do not know."

"Do you know and feel, that you are a sinner against God, and not reconciled to him?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you know, that you cannot save yourself, and need Jesus Christ to save you?"

"Yes, I *know* it," (said she, with a very significant accent upon the word know.)

"Then you have *some* conviction."

"You may call it conviction if you will, but I have no deep impressions."

"And are you just waiting for such impressions, before you will do anything, and when they come, you mean to seek God?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then, *you may wait for ever!*"

"Oh! I hope not!"

"Probably you will! Such deeper impressions seldom come, by waiting for them. How long have you been waiting for them already?"

"About five years, Sir."

"And have you *gained* anything, in those five years—any deeper impressions?"

"I do not know as I have."

"Will you gain anything, by waiting five years more?"

"I am afraid not," (said she sadly.)

"And *I* am afraid not," said I. "You may wait on, till you have just waited into the grave, and your *waiting will do you no good!*"

"What *shall* I do?"

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near."

"What! with my present impressions."

"Yes; with just your present impressions."

"I do not believe it will do any good."

"Perhaps not. But five years' *waiting* has done you no good, and you have no reason to think that five more would do you any. You have tried *waiting*, and now I want you to try seeking as the Bible bids you."

"I would seek the Lord, if I thought it was possible, with my present feelings."

"It *is* possible. I am confident you would not seek in vain. I *know* you are deceived. I know you are acting contrary to the commands of the gospel. I know you are putting your own wisdom in the place of God's wisdom, which calls you to seek the Lord, now, to-day. But you are waiting for conviction."

"Now I beg you to hear me, and treasure up what I say. I have several things to say to you. Will you hear me?"

"Most willingly, Sir."

"Then, 1. Remember, that God never tells you to *wait* for convictions, or anything else. He tells you, 'Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.'"

"2. You have *no occasion* to wait for any deeper impressions. In my opinion, you do not need them. You have impressions deep enough. How deep impressions does a sinner need? What does he need to know and feel, in order to be prepared to come to Christ? I will tell you; he needs to know, that he is a sinner—that he cannot save himself—that he needs Christ to save him. That is all—and you have all that already.

"3. Deeper impressions *never yet came* by waiting for them, without prayer and without attempting to flee to Christ—and they *never will*.

"4. Your *duty* is to turn from sin and the world to Christ, at once, to-day.

"5. If, after all, you do need any deeper impressions, I will tell you *how* you may get them, and you will get them in no other way: you will get them *just when* you aim to do as God bids you, to repent, to flee to Christ, to give God your heart. At present you are excusing yourself from all this, by the false notion, that you have not impressions enough to be able to do so. You do not, this moment, feel condemned for neglecting the great salvation; because you think you cannot attain it till you have deeper convictions. This is your excuse. And it is all a deception, in my opinion. But if you do need more deep convictions, you will get them when you aim to come to Christ. Then you will find you have no *heart* to do it, no *will* to do it, no readiness to deny yourself, and renounce the world, and then you will begin to see what an undone and helpless sinner you are, and how much you have need to pray for God's help, as you are *not* doing now. This is the way to gain deeper impressions, if you need them, —and the *only* way. Five years more of waiting, or fifty years, will not give them to you.—This is all I have to say."

I left her.—About three days after this I called on her again, and found her in a very solemn and sad state of mind. She said, that on thinking of what I had told her, she believed every word of it, and tried, with all her might, to do as I had exhorted her. She read her Bible, and prayed, and the more she tried to give up the world, and give God her heart, the more she found that her heart would not yield. She said she "could do nothing with it,—she did not believe there ever was such a heart, so opposed to God,—she never knew before what a sinner she was,—she did not believe there was any possibility of her ever turning to God."

"Jesus Christ," said I, "is able to save you."

She replied, "I suppose he is, but I do not think he ever will!"—As she said this she appeared deeply solemn, and was overcome with her emotions, which choked her utterance.

"Jesus Christ," said I, "is *more* than able to save you—he is willing."

She lifted her eyes upon me, with a despairing look :
"I wish I *knew* that he is willing."

"You *do* know it," said I. "His word tells you so. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Ho! every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'"

"Oh!" said she, "I will try to seek God."

I instantly left her.

Not long after, (a few days,) I called upon her, and found she was calm, and happy in hope. She said that all her trust was in Christ, and that the forbearance and love of God appeared to her most wonderful. She thanked me for what I had said to her. "You opened my eyes," said she. "When you came here that morning I did not intend to talk with you; and when you began to ask me, I was resolved not to tell you how I felt. And if you had not *made* me tell, and had not almost forced me to attend to religion now, I should have waited for deeper convictions all my life. But, Sir, I think you were wrong, when you told me I did not need any deeper convictions. At that time I knew almost nothing of my heart. I never found out how much it was opposed to God and his demands, till some time afterwards, when I resolved that I would become a Christian that very day."

"And did your resolve bring you to Christ?"

"Oh no! not at all. It did me no good. My heart would not yield. I was opposed to God, and found I was such a sinner, that I could do nothing for myself. My resolutions did me no good; and I gave up all, and just cried for mercy. Awhile after that, I began to be at peace. I do not know *how* it is, but *I* have done nothing for myself. Indeed, when I cried so for mercy, I had *given up trying* to do anything. It seems to me, that when I gave up trying, and cried to God; he did everything for me."

Some months after this, she united with the church, and has lived in its communion ever since, a useful and decided Christian.

There are multitudes in our congregations, who are just *waiting*, while they ought to be *acting*—who have a sort of indefinite hope about the aids of the Holy Spirit, yet to be experienced: while they are pursuing the very course to fail of attaining any such aids. They think they *must* wait. They think wrong. They must work, if they would have God work in them. There can be no religion without obedience. And there is not likely to be, with any sinner, a just sense of his dependence, till he earnestly intends and attempts to *obey the gospel*. Religion is practical. Much of its light comes by practical attempts. "If ye will do the works, ye shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Probably this young woman would have been led to her Saviour, five years before, had it not been for her error, about waiting for deeper impressions.

Not Discouraged.

A YOUNG woman of very yielding and amiable disposition, who belonged to my congregation, became alarmed about her condition, as a sinner; and set herself to seek the Lord. I visited her, and conversed with her, repeatedly. Her seriousness became more and more deep. I left her, one day, with a very strong expectation upon my mind, that the next time I should see her, she would be at peace with God. I thought so, because she seemed to realize, that God's law justly condemned her, as a sinner; that she was dependent upon sovereign grace; and that she ought to repent and flee to Christ. I thought so also; because she appeared to me just as others, with whom I was conversing every day, *had* appeared, immediately before their hopeful conversion to Christ. She seemed to me to know and feel the truths of the gospel, which are addressed to unconverted sinners; and therefore, I believed the Holy Spirit was with her to lead her to salvation. I left her with the urgency of the text, "behold now is the accepted time," pressed upon her conscience and her heart, with all the emphasis my words could give it.

The next time I saw her, a day or two afterwards, her whole appearance was altered. Her solemnity was gone. Her anxieties were evidently diminished. She met me with a smile that surprised and pained me. And, directly the contrary to her former habit, she began to speak of some common matter. Said I:

"Have you given Christ your heart, Mary?"

"Oh no, not yet," said she; "but I don't feel so bad as I did."

"Why not?" said I. "What reason have you to feel any better."

"I don't know, as you would think I have any reason; but I hope I shall be a Christian, by and by. I don't feel in so much haste as I did; and I am not so much afraid God will cast me off. And the sinfulness of my heart does not trouble me so much."

"My dear Mary!" said I, with astonishment and pain, "how is this? I expected different things! Evidently your seriousness is diminished! You care less for salvation than you did. What has altered your feelings since I saw you?"

"Why, when you left me the last time you were here, and told me to repent that day, I was dreadfully troubled. I felt that my heart was opposing God; and I was afraid to think of living without Christ, another hour. Your last words, '*to-day, to-day,*' rung in my ears! I could not get rid of them. But pretty soon, Miss S. S. came in, about an hour after you went away, and I told her how I felt. But she told me not to be discouraged, only to keep on seeking the Lord. *She* said I was doing very well, and I ought not to feel so; and if I did not get discouraged, I should soon find religion."

"And you believed her?" said I.

"Yes, I believed her; and I have felt better ever since—a great deal better."

"Felt better! Mary!—You are resting on a lie! You are miserably deceived! Doing well? How can you be doing well, while an impenitent sinner; rejecting Christ, and exposed every moment to the wrath of God for ever? Your friend, as you call her, has been doing the work of the great deceiver! She did not talk to you as the Bible does, '*to-day, to-day,* if you will hear his voice!'"

I aimed to arouse her; but it was all in vain! Her anxieties departed! She ceased to pray! and in a few days more, she was as careless and as worldly as ever.

It is not true, that a convicted and praying sinner is *doing well*, while without faith in Christ. Something more is needed. He must repent and believe. And certainly, if prayerless, he is doing ill.

This young woman, who misled the yielding and affectionate Mary, was a professor of religion ; and one of those who are very apt to be busy in times of revival. Doubtless she meant well ; but her influence was very unhappy. No one is ever safe in giving any counsel to impenitent sinners, unless he is careful to talk, just as the Bible talks to them. Blind guides do mischief.

Reliance on Man.

As I was leaving the place of a morning prayer-meeting, a young man about sixteen years of age came to me, and asked permission to accompany me home; for "he wanted to talk with me."

"What do you wish to say to me?" said I.

"Why—I want you to tell me what to do."

"I *have* told you, again and again. I can tell you nothing different—nothing new. You must repent, if you would be saved. You must give up your self-righteousness and flee to Christ. The Law condemns you. The sovereign grace of God only can save you. You must give up your miserable and long-continued attempts to save yourself. You must give God your heart as he requires, and as I have explained to you already many times."

"Yes, I know that; but I am so distressed! I cannot live so! I want you tell me something else."

"I cannot relieve your distress. Christ alone can give you rest. I have nothing else to tell you. I have told you all the truth—all you need to know."

"I thought," said he, "perhaps you could say something that would help me; if I went to your house."

"So you have said to me more than once, and I have told you better. God only can help you. You must rely on him."

"But I should like to talk with you again about my feelings, in your study."

"It would do you no good. You have nothing to say that you have not said before; and I have nothing new to say to you."

"Well—may I go home with you?"

"No. Go home. Man cannot help you. The whole matter lies betwixt yourself and God."

He turned away, the most downcast creature I ever saw. It seemed as if his last prop was gone. He walked as if his limbs could scarcely carry him.

I had not been at home an hour, before he came to tell me, that his burden was gone. He said, that after I "had cast him off," all hope forsook him, and he "had nowhere else to go but to God." Before he reached his home, (about a mile,) he had given all into the hands of God; and he felt so much relieved of his burden of sin and fear, that he thought he "would turn right about, and come right back and tell me."—But said he, "I do not believe I should have gone to God, if *you* had not cast me off."

Anxious sinners are often kept from Christ, by their reliances on men. A great amount of religious conversation often diminishes their impressions. It tends to blunt the edge of truth. It keeps the heart in a kind of reliance on men. Conversation with judicious Christians and judicious ministers is vastly important for inquiring sinners; but there is a point where it should cease. All that men can do is contained in two things—to make sinners understand God's truth, and make its impression upon their hearts and consciences, as deep as possible. If they aim at anything more, they are just trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit.—Visiting among inquirers one morning, I called on five different individuals, one after another, in the course of a single hour, and in each case was sorry I had called at all: for in each case, after a very few minutes of conversation, I was fully persuaded that God's truth was deeply felt, and that anything which I could say would tend to diminish the impression which the Holy Spirit was making on their hearts. I aimed to say just enough not to have them think I did not care for them; and got away as soon as I could, for fear of doing an injury.—Every one of these individuals afterwards dated her reli-

gious hope from the same day.—No *man* can preach so powerfully as the Holy Spirit. It is vastly important to *know when to stop*. The divine writers understood this. They are perfect examples. Their *silence* is to be imitated, as well as their utterance.

The Whole Heart.

IN the early part of my ministry, I was requested by a clergyman to attend a meeting for religious inquiry, and converse with the young men who were there. I spake to each one separately. Nothing occurred to impress the circumstance particularly on my memory. Twenty years afterwards, I met with a clergyman, who called up my recollection of that meeting. Said he, "I was there, and you spake to me. Do you remember what you said?" I had no recollection of the particulars. "Well, I have," said he, "and I will tell you how it was; I have long wanted to tell you. You asked me if I was seeking the Lord, and I told you that I was trying to. You asked me if my trying had done me any good; and I answered that I did not know as it had. You told me then that you could tell me the reason why it had *not*: the reason was, that I had sought with only a part of my heart. You went on to say to me, you must search with all your heart, not half of it; 'Ye shall seek me and ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' I wondered you said *that*; I thought I *was* seeking with all my heart. But this idea, 'with all your heart,' remained with me; I could not get rid of it, and finally I found out that this was exactly my difficulty. I had been seeking for months, but with a part of my heart only. Your words, '*all your heart, all your heart*,' led me into the knowledge of my character, and into the right way. I have often thought of that meeting, and wondered that you should know me so well. That circumstance has since been of great use to me, in conversing with anxious inquirers."

Ministers must sometimes draw their bow at a venture ; but it is better to take aim. There are *some* scripture arrows which we should always have in our quiver, because they are sure to hit—they will at least ring upon the harness if they do not penetrate the joints—they will alarm if they do not kill. After we have “toiled all night and taken nothing ;” if we cast our net on the right side of the ship it will not come in empty. There is but one way to Christ. Faith saves—the faith of the whole heart. Jesus, save me, or I die !

The Welsh Woman and her Tenant.

A MAN who was entirely a stranger to me, and whose appearance convinced me he was poor, and whose address showed that he was not very familiar with the subject of religion, called upon me one morning; and, with some agitation, desired me to go to a distant street, to see his wife, who was sick. On making some enquiries, I learned that his wife had the consumption—was not expected to live many days—had not expressed any desire to see me—but that he had come for me, at the request of an aged Welsh woman, who lived in the same house. I immediately went to the place he described. I found the woman apparently in the last stages of the consumption. She was an interesting young woman, of about twenty years of age, and had been married a little more than a year. All the appearance of her room was indicative of poverty, though everything manifested the most perfect neatness. She was bolstered up upon her bed, her face pale, with a bright red spot in the centre of each cheek. She appeared exceedingly weak, while her frequent cough seemed to be tearing her to pieces. Her condition affected me. Manifestly her youth and beauty were destined to an early grave. She must soon leave the world; and how tender and terrible the thought that she might still be unprepared for a happier one!

As I told her who I was, and why I had come there; she offered me her hand, with a ready and easy politeness; and yet, with a manifest embarrassment of feeling, which she evidently struggled to conceal.

I have seldom seen a more perfectly beautiful woman. Her frame was delicate, her complexion clear and white,

her countenance indicative of a more than ordinary degree of intelligence and amiability, and as she lifted her languid eyes upon me, I could not but feel in an instant that I was in the presence of an uncommon woman.

I felt her feverish pulse, which was rapidly beating, and expressing my sorrow at finding her so ill, she said to me, speaking with some difficulty :—

“ You find me—in very humble circumstances—Sir.”

“ Yes,” said I, “ you seem very sick.”

“ We have not—always been—so straitened as we are now,” said she. “ We lived—very comfortably—before—I was sick ; but I am not able—to do anything now : and I am ashamed—to have you find me—with my room, and all things—in such a state ;” (casting a look about the room.) “ Once—I could have seen you in a more inviting place ; but, Sir—we are now—very poor—and cannot live—as we used to. My situation—is—very humble—indeed.”

“ You have no occasion to be ashamed,” said I. “ Your room is very neat ; and if you are in want of anything, it will give me pleasure to aid you to whatever you need.”

“ Oh, Sir, I am not—in want—of anything now. I am too sick to need anything—more than the old lady—can do for me ; and she is—very kind.”

“ And who is the old lady ?” I asked.

“ Mrs. Williams,” said she ; “ in whose house—we have lived since ours—was sold ;—the woman that—wanted me to have you—come and see me. She has been—talking—to me about religion ;—(she is a Welsh—woman ;—) and she has read—to me—in the Bible, but—I cannot—understand it.”

“ And did you *wish* to have me come and see you ?”

“ No—yes—I am willing—to see you ; but—I am—in such—a place here—my room—”

“ My dear friend,” said I, “ do not *think* of such things at all. You have something of more moment to think of. You are very sick. Do you expect ever to get well ?”

“ No, Sir ; they—tell me—I shall not.”

“ And do you feel prepared to die ?”

"I do not know—what that—preparation—means. And, it is too late, now, for me to do anything—about it. —I am too far—gone."

"No, Madam, *you are not*. God is infinitely merciful; and you may be saved. Have you been praying to him to save you?"

"I never—prayed. Indeed, Sir,—I never thought—of religion, till I was—sick, and the old lady talked—to me. But I cannot—understand her. I have never—read the Bible.—I never was inside—of a church—in my life. Nobody—ever asked me—to go, or told me—I ought to. I did not think—of religion. I just lived to enjoy—myself—as well—as I could. My aunt—who took me—when my mother—died, never went—to church, and never said anything—to me about religion.—So I lived—as she—allowed me to, from the time I was three years old.—I had property—enough for everything—I wanted—then; and after I left—school—about four years ago,—I had nothing—to do—but to go to parties—and dances—and attend to—my dress, and read—till—I was married.—Since that—we have had trouble.—My husband—I suppose—did not understand things—in our country—very well. He mortgaged—my house, and in a little while—it was sold—and we were—obliged—to leave it, and come here."

"What did you read?" said I.

"Oh, I read novels; the most of the time—sometimes—I read other books; but—not much, except—some history, and biography."

"Did you never read the Bible?"

"No, Sir."

"Have you got a Bible?"

"No, Sir. The old lady—has got one—which she brings to me; but I am too weak—to read it.—It is a large book; and I—shall not live—long enough to read it."

"You need *not* read it," said I.—"But now suffer me to talk to you plainly. You are very sick. You may not live long. *Will* you give your attention to religion, as well as you can, in your weak state; and aim to get ready to die?"

"I would, Sir—if I had time. But I do not—know anything—at all—about religion—and it would do me—no good—to try now, when I have—so little time—left."

"You have *time enough* left."

"Do you—think so—Sir?"

"I *know* you have, Madam."

She turned her eyes upon me, imploringly and yet despondingly; and with a voice trembling with emotion, she said to me, speaking slowly and with difficulty:—

"Sir, I cannot—believe that.—I have never *begun*—to learn religion.—I lived only for my—present enjoyment—till I was married; and since that, after—my husband—failed—all I have thought of—was to save—some little—of my property—if I could; so as not to—be a burden—to other people.—And now,—there cannot—be time—enough left—for me—to begin with religion—and go—all the way through."

"*There is time enough*," said I.

Perceiving that she was already exhausted by her efforts to speak; I told her to rest for a few minutes, and I would see her again. I went into another room to see "the old lady," (as she called her,) whom I found to be a pious Welsh woman, who had rented a part of her house to the sick woman's husband, some months before, and who now devoted herself to take care of the poor sufferer. The tenant had squandered all his wife's property; and now during her sickness, continued his dissipation, paying little attention to his dying wife. If he ever *had* a heart, rum had destroyed it.

"She is a good creature," said the Welsh woman, "all but religion. When she was well, she was very kind to me. Though she was a *lady*, and had fine clothes, she was not ashamed to come and sit with me, an hour at a time, and talk to me and try to make me happy; for I am a poor, lone widow, seventy years old; and all my children are dead; and when I told her how it was with me, that I had nothing to live upon, but the rent I got for the rooms of my house; and she found out, (*I did not tell of it*), that her husband did not pay the rent any longer;

she sold her rings and some of her clothes, and brought me the money, poor thing, and told me to take it. I did not know, at first, that she sold her rings and her clothes to get it; and when I asked her how she got it, and she told me, I said to her I would not have it, it would burn my fingers if I took it, and the rust of it would eat my flesh, as it were fire, and be a canker in my heart, and be a swift witness against me in the day of the great God, our Saviour. So I gave it back to her; but she would not take it: she laid it down there,"—(pointing to it with her finger,—) "on the mantlepiece,—it is five weeks yesterday,—and there it has been ever since. I cannot touch it. I *never will* touch it, unless I am forced to take it to buy her a coffin. Christ Jesus would not have taken the price of a lady's rings and clothes, in such a case; and it is not for the like of me to do it. Poor thing! she will soon die, and then she will want rings and clothes no longer! Oh, Sir! if I could only think she would wear robes of glory in heaven I would not weep so. But I am afraid it is all too late for her now! Religion is a hard business for a poor, sick sinner! And her husband would not go for you, week before last, nor last week. He *never* went till this morning, when I told him, as I was a living woman, he never should enter the house to-night,—he should sleep in the street, if he did not bring you here before the clock struck twelve. I want you to pray for her. There is no telling what God may do. May be he will send suddenly. But *I* cannot tell her the way. I have tried. I tried hard; but, poor thing, she said she could not understand me. And then, I could do nothing but come to my room and weep for her, and go to prayer, and then weep again. I am glad you have come. And now *don't leave her*, till you have prayed and got a *blessing*,—if it is not too late."

I have seldom heard eloquence surpassing that of "the old lady." Some of her expressions were singular, but they seemed to have in them the majesty and tenderness of both nature and religion.

I borrowed the "old lady's" Bible; and returned to the sick woman's room. Seating myself by the side of her

bed, I told her I did not wish her to talk, for it wearied her. But I wanted she should listen to me, without saying a word, only if she did not understand me, she might say so, and I would explain myself.

"*Can* I understand?"—said she, (with a look of mingled earnestness and despair.)

"Certainly, you can. Religion is all simple and easy, if one desires to know it; and if you do *not* understand me, is *is my* fault, not *yours*."

"And now, my dear child; listen to me a little while. I will not be long. But first allow me to pray with you, for a single minute."

After prayer, I took the Bible, and told her it was God's word, given to us to teach us the way to eternal life and happiness beyond the grave;—that it taught all I knew, or needed to know about salvation;—that though it was a large book, and contained many things, which might be profitable to her under other circumstances; yet, all that she needed to think of just now, was embraced in a few ideas, which were easy to be understood;—and I wanted her to listen to them, and try to understand them.

"I will—Sir," said she, "as well—as I can."

"Hear what God says then," said I.

"The first thing is—that *we are sinners*." I explained *sin*. I explained the Law which it transgressed, how it is holy, just, and good; and we have broken it, because we have not loved the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

"No, I have—never loved—him," said she.

I dwelt upon our sin, as guilt and alienation from God; explained how sinners are worldly, proud, selfish; and read the texts as proofs and explanations,—"*by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified—the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God.*" In short, that man is, in himself, a lost sinner; God is angry with him, and he has a wicked heart.

Said she, "That seems—strange—to me; I wish—I had known it—before."

"The *second* thing is—that just such sinners may be

saved, because Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. I read from the Bible, 'God so loved the world that he gave his own Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.' You see, therefore, that sinners can be saved. Christ died for them."

"Will he—save *me*?" said she.

"I hope he will—but listen to me.—The *third* thing is, that lost sinners will be saved by Christ, if they repent of sin and believe in him." I continued to select texts and read them to her. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

As I read such passages, turning over the leaves of the book, as I stood by her bed-side; her eyes followed the turning leaves, and she gazed upon the book in astonishment. At times, when repeating a peculiar text, my eyes rested on her face instead of the book, and then she would ask, "Is that in God's word?" I found it best, therefore, just to look on the book, and read slowly and deliberately.

"The *fourth* thing is, that we need the aid of the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts, and bring us to faith and repentance. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him. In me is thy help. Let him take hold on my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.' Man is *helpless* without the Holy Spirit.

"The last thing is, that all this salvation is freely

offered to us, *now, to-day*, and it is our duty and interest to accept it on the spot, and just as we are, undone sinners. 'Hear and your soul shall live. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that is athirst come; and let him that heareth say, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'

"Now, my dear child, this is all: only these five things. I will now leave you for an hour, to rest, and then I will be back to see you."

In an hour I returned, determined to go over the same things, and explain them, if needful, more fully. As I entered the room she looked at me with a glad smile, and yet with an intense earnestness, which for an instant I feared was insanity. Said she, "I am so glad you have come;—I have been—thinking—of what you read—to me. These things—must be true; but—I don't know—as I should—believe them, if they were not—in the word—of God. I understand some—of them.—I know I am—a sinner—I feel it. I never knew it—so before.—I have not—loved God. I have been—wicked and foolish. I am—undone. And now—when I know it, my heart—is so bad, that instead of—loving God—it shrinks from—him,—and I am afraid—it is too—late—for me!"

"Yes," said I; "your heart is worse than you think. You can make it no better. Give it to God. Trust Christ to pardon all. He died for just such lost sinners."

"Yes, Sir,—I remember—that; but—what is it—to believe? I do not—understand *that—thing*.—You said I must repent of sin, and must *believe*—in Jesus Christ.—

I think that I understand one—of these things. To repent is to be sorry for my sin,—and to leave it. But—what is it—to *believe*?—I cannot—understand that.—What is believing—in Jesus Christ?”

“It is trusting him to save you. It is receiving him, as your own offered Saviour, and giving yourself to him, as a helpless sinner, to be saved by his mercy. He died to atone for sinners.”

“I believe that,—for God’s word—says so.—Is this—all the faith—that I must have?”

“No; not at all. You must have more. You must *trust* him. You must receive him as *your own* Saviour, and give yourself to him. You may remember the passage I read to you. Here it is in God’s word: ‘As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.’ You see that here, ‘believing’ and ‘receiving’ express the same thing. You are to take Christ as God offers him to you; and you are to rely on him to save you. That is faith.”

“Sir,—I am afraid—I can never—understand it,” said she, the tears coursing over her pale cheek.

“Yes, you *can*; it is very simple. There are only two things about it. Take Christ for your own, and give yourself to him to be his. Sometimes these two things are put together in the Bible, as when a happy believer says, ‘my beloved is mine, and I am his.’ It is union with Christ, as if he were your husband, and you were his bride.”

“Oh, Sir,—it is all dark to me!—faith—I cannot—understand it!”

“See here, my dear child. If you were here on this island, and it was going to sink; you would be in a sad condition if you could not get off; there would be no hope for you, if you had no help; you would sink with the island; you could not save yourself; you might get down by the shore and know and feel the necessity of being over on the other side, quickly, before the island should go down. But you could not get there alone. There is a wide river betwixt you and the place of safety, where you

wish to go. It is so deep, that you could not wade it. It is so wide and rapid that you could not swim it. Your case would be hopeless if there was no help for you. You would be lost!—but there is a boat there; you see it, going back and forth, carrying people over, where they want to go. People tell you it is safe, and you have only to go on it. It seems safe to you as you behold it in motion. You believe it is safe. Now, what do you do in such a case? You just *step on board the boat*. You do not merely *believe* it would save you, if you were on it, but *you go* on it. You commit yourself to it. When you get on, you do not work, or walk, or run, or ride. You do *nothing but one*. *You take care not to fall off*. That is all. You just trust to the boat to hold you up from sinking, and to carry you over where you want to go. Just so, trust yourself to Jesus Christ to save you; he will carry you to heaven—venture on him now—he waits to take you.”

“But—*will* he save—such—a wicked—undone creature—as I am?”

“*Yes, he will*. He *says* he will. He came from heaven to do it; ‘to seek and to save’ that which was lost.’ He invites you to come to him; I read it to you in his word ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’”

“May I go?” says she, (her countenance indicating the most intense thought, and her eyes, suffused with tears of gladness and doubt, fixing upon me as if she would read her doom from my lips.)

“Yes, you may go to Christ; come in welcome, come now, come just such a sinner as you are: Christ loves to save such sinners.”

She raised herself upon her couch, and leaning upon her elbow, with her dark locks falling over the snowy whiteness of her neck, her brow knit, her lips compressed, her fine eyes fixed upon me, and her bosom heaving with emotion, she paused for a moment,—said she:—

“I do want—to come to Christ.”

“He wants you to come,” said I.

“Will he—*take—me*?” said she.

"Yes, he will; he *says* he will," said I.

"I am wicked—and do not—deserve it," said she.

"He knows that, and died to save you," said I.

"Oh, I think—I would come, if God—if the Holy Spirit—would help—me. But—my heart—is *afraid*. I thought—just now, if I onlyknew—the way—I *would* do it; but now, when—you have told me; I cannot believe it; I cannot—trust Christ. I never—knew before what—a distant heart I have!"

"The Holy Spirit does help you; at this moment in your heart, he urges you to come, to trust Christ. The Bible tells you to come. 'The Spirit and the bride say, come.' God lengthens the hours of your life that you may come, while he says to you, 'Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.'"

I paused for a little time; and as I watched her countenance, she appeared to be absorbed in the most intense thought; her brow was slightly knit—her lips quivered—her fine eyes roamed from side to side, and often upwards, and then closed for a moment, and seeming utterly forgetful of my presence, she slowly pronounced the words, with a pause almost at every syllable;—"lost sinner—anger—God—Christ—blood—love—pardon—heaven—help—Bible—now—come;" and then, turning her eyes upon me, she said:

"I do want—to come—to Christ—and rest on him.—If my God—will accept—such—a vile sinner—I give myself—to him—for ever!—oh!—he will—accept me—by Christ—who died!—Lord—save me—I lie on thee—to save me."

She sunk back upon her bed, with her eyes lifted to heaven, and her hands raised in the attitude of prayer, while her countenance indicated amazement.

I knelt by her bed, uttered a short prayer, and left her, to return at sunset.

As I returned, the old Welsh woman met me at the door, her eyes bathed in tears, and her hands lifted to the heavens. I supposed she was going to tell me that the sick woman was dead; but, with uplifted hands, she ex-

claimed, "Blessed be God! blessed be God! The poor thing is happy now; she is so happy! Thank God! she is so happy! she looks like an angel now! she has seen Christ, her Lord, and she will be an angel soon! Now I can let her die! I can't stop weeping! she has been a dear creature to me! but it makes my heart weep for joy now when I see what God has done for her, and how happy she is."

She conducted me to her sick friend's room. As I entered, the dying woman lifted her eyes upon me, with a smile:—

"The Lord—has made me happy!—I am—very happy. I was afraid—my wicked heart—never would—love God. But, he has—led me to it. Christ is very dear—to me. I can—lean on him now. I—can die—in peace."

I conversed with her for some minutes, the "old lady" standing at my elbow, in tears; she was calm and full of peace; she said, "All you told me—was true. My heart finds it true. How good—is Jesus, to save such sinners!—I was afraid—to fall upon him; but I know now—that believing is all. My heart—is different. I do love God. Jesus Christ is very dear—to me."

She appeared to be fast sinking. I prayed with her and left her. The next day she died. I visited her before her death. She was at peace. She could say but little; but some of her expressions were remarkable. She desired to be bolstered up in her bed, that she might "be able to speak once more." She seemed to rally her strength; and speaking with the utmost difficulty, the death-gurgle in her throat, and the tears coursing down her pale, and still beautiful cheek, she said:—

"I *wonder*—at God.—Never was there such love.—He is all goodness.—I want—to praise—him.—My soul—loves him. I delight—to be his.—He—has forgiven me—a poor sinner—and now—his love exhausts me.—The Holy Spirit—helped me—or my heart—would have held—to its own—goodness—in its unbelief.—God has—heard me.—He has come—to me,—and now—I live—on prayer.—Pardon me—Sir,—I forgot—to thank you—I was

—so carried off—in thinking—of my God. He will—reward you—for coming—to see me.—I am going—to him—soon—I hope.—Dying will be sweet—to me—for Christ—is with me.”

I said a few words to her, prayed with her, and left her. As I took her hand at that last farewell, she cast upon me a beseeching look, full of tenderness and delight, saying to me: “May I hope—you—will always—go to see dying sinners?”—It was impossible for me to answer audibly;—she answered for me; “I know—you will—farewell.”

She continued to enjoy entire composure of mind till the last moment. Almost her last words to the “old lady” were, “My delight is—that God—is king—over all, and saves sinners—by Jesus Christ.”

I called at the house after she was dead, and proposed to the “old lady” that I would procure a sexton, and be at the expense of her funeral; lifting both her hands towards the heavens, she exclaimed,—“*No Sir!* indeed; *no Sir!* You wrong my heart to think of it! God sent you here at my call; and the poor thing has died in peace. My old *heart* would turn against me, if I should allow *you* to bury her! the midnight thought would torment me! She has been a dear creature to me, and died such a sweet death. I shall make her shroud with my own hands; I shall take her ring money to buy her coffin; I shall pay for her grave; and then, as I believe her dear spirit has become a ministering angel, I shall hope she will come to me in the night, and carry my prayer back to her Lord.”

She had it all in her own way; and we buried her with a tenderness of grief, which I am sure has seldom been equalled.

If this was a conversion at all, it was a death-bed conversion. A suspicion or fear may justly attach to such instances perhaps; and persons wiser than myself have

doubted the propriety of publishing them to the world. But the instance of the thief on the cross is published to us; and if the grace of God does sometimes reach an impenitent sinner on the bed of death; why should we greatly fear the influence of its true history? The wicked may indeed abuse it, as they abuse everything that is good and true; but it must be an amazingly foolish abuse, if on account of a few such instances, they are induced to neglect religion, till they come to die. It is very rare that a death-bed is like this.

I deemed it very important to convince her it was not too late to seek the Lord; and I found it a very difficult thing. The truth, that it was not too late, came into conflict with the unbelief and deceitfulness of her heart. It seems to me, that we ought not to limit the Holy One of Israel, leading sinners to believe, that even a death-bed lies beyond hope. Truth is always safe; error, never. And if there is good evidence of a death-bed conversion, why should it be kept out of sight?

And yet it is no wonder that careful minds are led to distrust sick-bed repentance. It seldom holds out. Manifestly, it is commonly nothing but deception. Health brings back the former impiety, or that which is worse.

It does not appear, that the dying thief knew anything about the Saviour, till he *was* dying; and this woman seems to have been like him. And what a lesson of reproof to Christians, that this woman, living for twenty years among them, and in the sight of five or six Christian churches, "should never have been inside of a church in her life," and that "nobody asked her to go." Year after year she was in habits of intimacy with those who belonged in Christian families, she associated with the children of Christian parents, and yet, she never had a Bible—she never read the Bible—she never was exhorted to seek the Lord! and, probably, she would have died as she had lived, had not divine Providence sent her in her poverty to be the tenant of the "old lady," who loved her so well. Oh! how many are likely to die soon, with no "old lady" to bring them the Bible and pray for them in faith and love.

The Heart Promised.

ONE of the most perplexing, and to me distressing instances of continued and ineffectual seriousness, that I have ever known, was that of a young woman who seemed to me to be as near perfection, as any person that I have ever known. She was about twenty years old, of good mind, and more than ordinary intelligence. Everybody that knew her loved her. She had been religiously educated, and was of a very sober and thoughtful disposition, though uniformly cheerful. She became interested on the subject of religion, and attended the meeting for religious inquiry, week after week. In personal conversation with her at her house, I aimed repeatedly to remove all her difficulties of mind, and explain to her the way of salvation. She appeared to understand and believe all that was said to her. Her convictions of sin seemed to be clear and deep. That she could be justified only through faith in Christ, she had no doubt. Of his power and readiness to save her, if she would come to him, she had not a doubt. She deeply felt that she needed the aids of the Holy Spirit, and seemed to realize with peculiar solemnity that the Holy Spirit was striving with her. Her seriousness continued for weeks; and while others around her were led to rejoicing in the Lord, her mind remained without peace or hope. I exercised all my skill to ascertain her hindrances, to show her the state she was in, and lead her to Christ. It was all in vain. There she stood, left almost alone. Her condition distressed me; I had said everything to her that I could think of, which I supposed adapted to her state of mind. I had referred her to numerous passages in the Bible, and explained them to her most carefully.

She had no objections to make. She heard all I said to her, with apparent docility and manifest thankfulness; and yet, she said she was as far from the kingdom of heaven as ever, her heart was unmoved, and enmity against God.

Just at this period, I accidentally met her one morning in the street. I was sorry to meet her, for I thought I must say something to her; I had said all, and I knew not what to say. Offering her my hand, I asked, "Sarah, have you given your heart to God?"

"No, Sir," said she tremulously.

"Don't you think you ought to?"

"I *know*, I *ought* to."

"Do you *mean* to do so?"

"Yes, Sir, I do."

"Don't you think you ought to do it *to-day*?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then *will* you?"

"Yes, *I will*," said she, emphatically.

"Good-bye," said I; and instantly left her.

A day or two afterwards I saw her, and she had wanted very much to see me; she wanted to tell me how she felt, and how she had been affected. She said that she had never felt so before, that her mind was at rest—that she now loved God—that his character and law appeared to her most excellent, worthy of all admiration and love—that she could now trust in the blood of Christ, and wondered she had never done it before. She partly hoped, though she scarcely dared to hope that her heart was renewed by the Holy Spirit. "But," said she, "after I made you that promise I would have given all the world, if I had not made it. I hunted after you to take back my promise; but I could not find you. The thought of it haunted me. It distressed me beyond measure. I wondered at myself for being so rash as to make it; but I dared not break it. I had a dreadful struggle with myself, to give up all into the hands of God; but I am glad of it now."

"Then you think," said I, "that you have done something very acceptable to him?"

"Oh no! not *I!* *I* have done nothing. But I hope God has done something for me. All *I* could do, was to tell him I could do nothing, and pray him to help me."

She united with the church, and yet honours her profession.

This is the only case, in which I have ever led any person to make such a promise. I doubt the propriety of doing it. I did not really intend it, in this instance. I was led into it at the time, by the nature of our conversation, and the solicitude I felt for one, to whom I knew not what to say.

The resolutions of an unconverted sinner are one thing, and the operations of the Holy Spirit are quite another. They may coincide indeed; and if such resolutions are made in the spirit of a humble reliance on God, they may be beneficial: "I will arise and go to my father," was no improper purpose. But if such resolutions are made in self-reliance, they are rash, and will seldom be redeemed. Sarah seems to have found herself insufficient for keeping her promise. "All I could do, was to tell him I could do nothing, and pray him to help me."

If any one thinks that he has turned to God without the special aids of the Holy Spirit; it is probable, that he has never turned to God at all. Certainly, he cannot sing, "He sent from above: he took me, he drew me out of many waters; he delivered me from my strong enemy."

Fixed Despair.

THERE was in my congregation, at one time, a woman about forty years of age, who was a subject of wonder to me. She was one of the most intelligent and well educated of the people; she had been brought up from her childhood in the family of a clergyman, as his daughter; she was very attentive to the observance of the Sabbath; she was never absent from her seat in the church. As the mother of a family, she had few equals. Everybody respected her. But she was not a member of the church. And whenever I had endeavoured to call her attention to the subject of religion, she was so reserved, that I could not even conjecture what was her particular state of mind. I was told that she never spake to any one, in respect to her religious feelings.

My ignorance of her views and feelings led me to be in doubt, what to say to her. I felt that I was groping in the dark, every time I attempted to converse with her. Sometimes I suspected, that she secretly indulged a hope in Christ, though she told me to the contrary. At other times I suspected, that she was relying upon her perfectly moral life for salvation, though she denied this also.

I could not persuade her to seek the Lord; nor could I ascertain what was her hinderance. And I was the more surprised at this, on account of the profound respect which she appeared to have for religion; and her deep solemnity whenever I spoke to her on the subject. I had hoped, that by conversation with her I might get a glimpse of her heart, that the peculiarity of her state of mind would casually become manifest; and thus I should learn what it would be best for me to say to her. But she was too

reserved for this. After several trials I was still in the dark. I did not know what she thought or felt—what it was, that kept her from attending to her salvation.

I called upon her, one day, and frankly told her my embarrassment about her. I mentioned her uniform taciturnity, my motive in aiming to overcome it, my supposition that some error kept her from religion, and my inability even to conjecture what it was. I said to her, that I had not a doubt, there was something locked up in her own mind, which she never whispered to me. She seemed very much surprised at this declaration; and I instantly asked her, if it was not so. With some reluctance she confessed it was. And then, after no little urgency, she said she would tell me the whole, not on her own account, but that *her* case might not discourage me from aiming to lead others to Christ.

She then said that her day of grace was past—that she had had every possible opportunity for salvation—that every possible motive had a thousand times been presented to her—that she had been the subject of deep convictions and anxiety often—that she had lived through three remarkable revivals of religion, in which many of her companions had been led to Christ—that she had again and again attempted to work out her salvation; but all in vain. “I know my day is gone by,” said she. “I am given over. The Holy Spirit has left me.”

She spake this in a decided manner, solemnly and coldly, unmoved as a rock! It surprised me. And as I was silently thinking for a moment, how I could best remove her error; she went on to say, that she had never before now mentioned this, for a number of years—that she fully believed in the reality of experimental religion—that she believed all that she had ever heard me preach; except when once or twice, I had spoken of religious despair—that, as her day of grace was past, she did not wish to have her mind troubled on the subject of religion at all—and asked me to say nothing more to her about it.

I enquired how long she had been in this state of mind.

She told me she had known for eighteen years, that there was no salvation for her. I enquired if she ever prayed. She said she had not prayed in eighteen years. I inquired if she did not feel unhappy to be in such a state. She said she seldom thought of it—it would do no good—and she never intended to think of it again. I asked :—

“Do you believe the heart is deceitful?”

“Yes, I *know* it.”

“It may be, then, that your wicked heart has deceived *you*, in respect to your day of grace.”

This idea appeared to stagger her, for a moment ; but she replied,

“No ; I am not deceived.”

“Yes ; you are.”

“No ; I am not. Nothing can save me now : and I do not wish to have my mind disturbed by any more thought about it.”

“Why do you attend church ?”

“Only to set a good example. I believe in religion as firmly as you do ; and wish my children to be Christians.”

“Do you pray for *them* ?”

“No ; prayer from me would not be heard.”

“Madam,” said I, emphatically, “you are in an error. I know you are. And I can convince you of it. If you will hear me, lend me your mind, and speak frankly to me, and tell me the grounds on which your despair rests, I will convince you, that you are entirely deceived. I cannot do it now. It would take too long. You have so long been in this state, and have fortified your error by so many other deceptions ; that it will take some days to demolish the defences you have heaved up around you. But I can do it. If your mind will adhere to a thing once proved to you—if when a thing is *fixed*, your mind will let it *stay* fixed, and not just have the same doubt *after* the demonstration, that it had before it ; I am perfectly certain you may be led to see your error. May I come to see you again about it ?”

“I had rather not see you. It will do no good. It

will only make me miserable. I did not intend to tell you how I felt ; but when you found out that something was concealed, I would not deceive you. But I wish to hear no more about it. *My day of grace is past for ever.*"

"No, it is *not*," said I, most emphatically. "Your deceitful heart has only seized on that idea, *as an excuse for not coming to repentance*. Allow me, at least, to come and see you."

"I had rather not, Sir."

"Madam, you must ! *I cannot* leave you so ! I will not ! I love you too well to do it. I ask it as a personal favour to myself ; and I shall not think you have treated me politely if you refuse it. May I see you a little while to-morrow ?"

"I will *see* you,—if you so much desire it."

"I thank you, my dear lady. You have greatly gratified me. You will yet believe what I have said to you. I *know* you can be *saved*. And you know *me* well enough to know that I am not the man to make such strong declarations rashly. All I ask is the opportunity to convince you. I will see you to-morrow."

In all this conversation she seemed as unmoved as a stone. She did not shed a tear, or heave a sigh. She could talk about the certainty of her eternal misery, as if her heart were ice.

The next day when I called, I asked to know the reasons or evidences on which her dreadful opinion rested. She told me one after another, referring to many texts of Scripture ; and did it with a coldness which made me shudder. Of the certainty of her eternal enmity to God, and her eternal misery, she reasoned so coolly, that I almost felt I was listening to words from the lips of a corpse !

Perceiving that she would probably decline seeing me again, and wanting time to study her case more carefully, I suddenly took leave of her. I had expected the old affair of the "unpardonable sin," or "sin against the Holy Ghost ;" but I found a far more difficult matter.

I called again. Evidently she was sorry to see me. But I gave her no time to make any objections. I desired her to listen to me, and not yield her assent to what I was going to say, if she could reasonably avoid it. I then took up her evidences of being for ever given over of God, beginning with the weakest of them; and in about an hour had disposed of several in such a way that she acknowledged her deception "in respect to *them*." "But," says she, "there are stronger ones left."

"We will attend to them hereafter," said I. "But remember, you have found your mistake in respect to *some*; therefore, it is possible you may be mistaken in respect to *others*."—This remark was the first thing that appeared to stagger her old opinion. She *said* nothing; but evidently her confidence was shaken.

I saw her time after time, about once a week, for five or six weeks; examined all her reasons for thinking her day of grace gone by, except one, and convinced her they were false. Evidently she had become *intellectually* interested. There was but one point left. She had never in all this time expressed a wish to see me, or asked me to call again. I now called her attention summarily to the ground we had gone over, and how she had found all her refuges of lies swept away, save one, as she had herself acknowledged; and if that were gone she would think her salvation possible;—and then asked her if she *wished* to see me again.

She replied that her *opinion* was unchanged; but that she *should* like to hear what I had to say about this remaining point, which, (as she truly said,) I had avoided so often.

I called the next day. I took up the one point left—this last item which doomed her to despair; and as I examined it, reasoning with her, and asked if she thought me right, from step to step as I went on, the intensity of her thought became painful to me. She gazed upon me with unutterable astonishment. Her former cold and stonelike appearance was gone; her bosom heaved with

emotion, and her whole frame seemed agitated with a new kind of life. To see the dreadful fixedness of despair melting away from her countenance, and the dawns of inceptive hope taking its place, was a new and strange thing to me. It looked like putting life into a corpse. As my explanation and argument drew towards the close, she turned pale as death. She almost ceased to breathe. And when I had finished, and in answer to my question she confessed, that she had no reason to believe her day of grace was past,—instantly she looked as if she had waked up in a new world. The tears gushed from her eyes in a torrent—she clasped her hands—sprung from her seat, and walked back and forth across the room, exclaiming, “I can be saved! I can be saved! I can be saved!” She was so entirely overcome, that I thought she would faint, or her reason give way. I dared not leave her. I said nothing, but remained till she became more composed, and took my leave with a silent bow.

The next Sunday evening, she was at the inquiry meeting. She appeared like other awakened sinners, nothing remarkable about her, except her very manifest determination to seek the Lord with all her heart.

In about three weeks, she became one of the happiest creatures in hope, that I ever saw. She afterwards united with the church, and yet lives a happy and decided believer.

The gospel is addressed to hope. Despair must always be deaf to it. Entire despair is incompatible with seeking God. Despair cannot pray. The last effort of the devil seems to be, to drive sinners to despair. “We are saved by hope,” says the apostle.

Few errors are harmless. None are safe. Truth is never injurious. And I can have no sympathy with those ministers, who think an error may do an impenitent sinner good. Tricks are not truth.

Total Depravity.

ABOUT to call upon a young woman, to whom I had sometimes spoken on the subject of religion, but who uniformly appeared very indifferent; I began to consider what I should say to her. I recollected, that, although she had always been polite to me, yet she evidently did not like me; and therefore I deemed it, my duty, if possible, not to allow her dislike to *me*, to influence her mind against religion. I recollected also, that I had heard of her inclination towards another denomination, whose religious sentiments were very different from my own; and I thought therefore, that I must take care not to awaken *prejudices*, but to aim to reach her conscience and her heart. The most of her relatives and friends were members of my church, she had been religiously educated, was a very regular attendant upon divine worship; and I knew, therefore, that she must have considerable intellectual knowledge, on the subject of religion. But she was a gay young woman, loved amusements and thoughtless society; and I supposed she would be very reluctant to yield any personal attention to her salvation, lest it should interfere with her pleasures. And beyond all this, I had heard, that she possessed a great share of independence, and the more her friends had urged her to attend to her salvation, the more she seemed resolved to neglect it.

I rang the bell, inquired for her, and she soon met me in the parlour. I immediately told her for what purpose I had called; and asked whether she was willing to talk with me on the subject of her religion. She replied:—

“I am willing to talk with you; but I don’t think as you do, about religion.”

"I do not ask you to think as I do. I may be wrong; but the word of God is right. I have not come here to intrude *my* opinions upon you, but to induce you to act agreeably to your own."

"Yes," she replied, (with a very significant toss of the head,) "you all *say* so. But if anybody ventures to differ from you, then they are '*heretics*,' and '*reprobates*.'"

"I beg pardon, Miss S.—I really do not think you can say that of *me*."

"Well—I mean—mother, and the rest of them; and I suppose you are just like them. If I *do* differ from you, I think I might be let alone, and left to my own way."

"Most certainly," said I, "if your own way is right."

"Well," says she, "I am a Unitarian."

"I am very glad to hear it; I did not know that you were anything."

"I mean," said she, "that I think more like the Unitarians, than like you."

"I doubt it," said I; "but, no matter. Never mind what *I* think. *I* am no rule for *you*. I do not ask you to think as *I* do. Let all that go. You may call me fool, or bigot, or—"

"You are no *fool*; but I think you are a *bigot*," says she.

"Very well," said I; "I am happy to find you so frank. And you—"

"Oh," said she, blushing, "I did not mean to say that; indeed, I did not. That is too impudent."

"Not a bit," said I. "It is just right."

"Well," said she, "it is true that I *think* so; but it was not polite to *say* it."

"I thank you for saying it. But no matter what *I* am. I wish to ask you about yourself first; and then you may say anything to me that you please to say.—Do you believe the Bible?"

"Yes;—to be sure I do!" (Tartly.)

"Are you aiming to live according to it? For example, are you daily praying to God to pardon and save you?"

"No!" said she; (with an impudent accent.)

"Does not the Bible command you to pray? 'to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near?'"

"Yes, I know that; but I don't believe in total depravity."

"No matter. I do not ask you to believe in it. But I suppose you believe you are a *sinner*?"

"Why, *yes*." (Impatiently.)

"And need God's forgiveness?"

"Yes."

"Are you seeking for it?"

"No."

"Ought you not to be seeking for it?"

"Yes; I suppose so."

"Well, then, will you begin, without any more delay? and act as you know you ought, in order to be saved?"

"You and I don't agree," says she.

"No matter for that. But we agree in one thing: I think exactly as you do, that you ought to seek the Lord. But you don't agree with *yourself*. Your course disagrees with your conscience. You are not against *me*, but against your own reason and good sense—against your known duty, while you lead a prayerless life. I am surprised that a girl of your good mind will do so. You are just yielding to the desires of a wicked and deceitful heart. I do not ask you to think as I think, or feel as I feel; I only ask you to *act* according to the Bible and your own good sense.—Is there any thing unreasonable, or unkind, any bigotry in asking this?"

"Oh, no, Sir. But I am sorry I called you a bigot."

"I am glad of it. I respect you for it. You spoke as you felt.—But let that pass. I just want you to attend to religion in your own way, and according to God's word. I did not come here to abuse you, or domineer over you, but to reason with you. And now suffer me to ask you, if you think it right and safe to neglect salvation, as you are doing? I know you will answer me frankly."

"No; I do not think it is."

"Have you long thought so?"

"Yes; to tell you the truth, I *have*, a good while."

"Indeed! and how came you still to neglect?"

"I *don't know*! But they keep talking to me,—a kind of *scolding* I call it; and they talk in such a way, that I am provoked, and my mind turns against religion. If they would talk to me as you do, and reason with me, and not be *dinging* at me, and treating me as if I were a *fool*, I should not feel so."

Said I, "They may be unwise perhaps, but they mean well; and you ought to remember, that religion is not to be blamed for *their* folly.—And now, my dear girl, let me ask you seriously;—will you attend to this matter of your salvation as well as you can, according to the word of God and with prayer, and endeavour to be saved? Will you do it, without any farther delay? If you are not disposed to do so; if you think it best, and right, and reasonable to neglect it; if you do not wish me to say any thing more to you about it; then, say so, and I will urge you no more: I shall be sorry, but I will be still. I am not going to annoy you, or treat you impolitely.—What do you say? shall I leave you and say no more?"

"I don't wish you to leave me."

"Well, do you *wish* to seek the Lord?"

"I wish to be *saved*," said she. "But I never can believe in total depravity. The doctrine disgusts me. It sounds so much like *cant*. I *never will* believe it. I abhor it. And I *won't* believe it."

"Perhaps not," said I. "I do not ask you to believe it. But I ask you to repent of sin *now*—to improve your day of grace, and get ready for death and heaven. I ask you to love the world supremely no longer—to deny yourself and follow Christ, as you know you ought to do. When you sincerely try to do these things; you will begin to find out something about your heart, that you do not know now."

"But I don't like *doctrines*! I want a practical religion!"

"That practical religion is the very thing I am urging upon you; the practice of prayer—the practice of repentance—the practice of self-denial—the practice of loving and serving God in faith. I care no more about doctrines than you do, for their own sake. I only want *truth*, which shall guide you rightly and safely, and want you to follow it."

"Well," said she, "if I attempt to be religious, I shall be a Unitarian."

"Be a Unitarian then, if the Bible and the Holy Spirit will make you one. Do not be afraid to be a Unitarian. But get at the truth, and follow it, according to your own sober judgment. Study your Bible, for your own heart. Get right. Pray God to direct you. And never rest, till you feel, that God is your friend and you are his. I beseech you to this; because I love you and wish you to be right and happy.—And now, my dear girl, tell me, will you try to do it!"

"Yes, Sir, *I will*."

"I thank you for that promise. And I do trust God will bless you."

In a few days she sent for me. I found her very sad. She told me she was in trouble. She had not found it so easy a thing to be a Christian as she expected. Her heart rebelled and recoiled; and she did not know what was the matter. Her mind would wander. The world would intrude.—Instead of "getting nearer to religion, she was getting farther off, every day." She wanted to know, if other people felt so, when they tried to be Christians.

I said but little to her, except to direct her to God's promises, to those that seek him with all their heart. She desired me to pray with her, which I did.—As I rose to depart; she affectionately entreated me not to neglect her.

About ten days after this, she sent for me again. I obeyed her summons. She told me, with tears in her eyes, that she never dreamed she was so wicked. She said the

more she tried to love God and give up sin ; the more her own heart opposed her. Her sins not only appeared greater ; but it seemed to her, that sinning was as natural to her as breathing. "*What shall I do ?*" said she ; " I have no peace, day or night ! My resolutions are weak as water."

I repeated texts of Scripture to her. ' In me is thy help. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,' (his thoughts are wrong,) ' and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Strive to enter in at the strait gate.'

I saw her several times. She said her troubles increased upon her, temptations came up every day ; and it seemed to her, "*there never was so wicked a heart*," as she had to contend with." Among other things, she said, some Christian people would keep talking to her, and she did not wish to hear them. I advised her to avoid them as much as possible. And without letting her know it, I privately requested her officious exhorters to say nothing to her. But I found it hard work to keep them still. And when she complained to me again of their officious inquiries about her feelings ; I requested her to leave the room, whenever any one of them should venture on such an inquiry again.*

She continued her prayerful attempts after the knowledge of salvation ; and in a few weeks she found peace and joy in believing in Christ. She told me she *knew* her entire depravity ; " but," said she, " I never should have believed it, if I had not found it out by my own experience. It was just as you told me. When I really tried to be a Christian, such as is described in the Bible ; I found my heart was all sin and enmity to God. And I am sure, I never should have turned to Christ, if God had not shown me mercy. It was all grace."

* How much harm is done by the obtrusive and indiscreet zeal of some well-meaning but injudicious professors.—Ed.

"Now I believe in total depravity. But I learnt it alone. *You* did not convince me of it."

"I never tried," said I.

"I know you didn't; and it was well for me that you let it alone. If you had tried to prove it, or gone into a dispute about Unitarianism; I believe I should not have been led to my Saviour."*

She afterwards made a public profession of religion, which she still lives to honour.

* In no instance was the sound judgment of the Author more conspicuous than in this case. Controversy is not the way to produce conversion. When we would correct error and subdue prejudice in a person we wish to convince and lead into the way of salvation, we had better deal with the conscience by applying first principles than with the judgment in a polemical strain.—ED.

Excitement.

WHILE God was pouring out his Spirit upon the congregation to which I ministered, and upon many other places around us, two individuals belonging to my parish went to a neighbouring town to attend a "camp meeting." One of them was a young man of about twenty years of age, whose mother and sisters were members of the church. The other was a man of about twenty-six years, whose wife and wife's sister were also communicants with us. Both of these men returned from that meeting professed converts to Christ. They had gone to it, as they told me, without any serious impressions, impelled by mere curiosity. While there they became very much affected; so much so, that one or both of them fell to the ground, and remained prostrate for an hour, unable to stand. They earnestly besought the people to pray for them, and prayed for themselves. Their feelings became entirely changed; instead of grief and fear, they were filled with joy and delight. And in this joyful frame of mind they returned home, not having been absent but two or three days.

I soon visited them both, and conversed with them freely. At my first interview, I had great confidence in their conversion. They seemed to me to be renewed men, so far as I could judge, from their exercises of mind. They appeared humble, solemn, grateful, and happy. In future conversations with them, my mind was led to some distrust of the reality of their conversion. They did not seem to me to have an *experimental knowledge of the truth*, to such an extent, as I believed a regenerated sinner would have. I could get no satisfactory answers when I asked, "What made you fall? how did you feel?"

what were you thinking of? What made you afterwards so happy? What makes you so happy now? What makes you think God has given you a new heart? What makes you think you will not return to the world and love it as well as ever?" They had ready answers to all such questions; but they did not seem to me to be *right* answers. They appeared to have no clear and full ideas of the exceeding sinfulness of the heart, of remaining sin, or the danger of self-delusion. And yet these men were prayerful, thoughtful, serious, and happy. They studied their Bibles, forsook their old companions, and appeared to value and relish all the appointed means of grace. In this way of life they continued for months. I took pains to see and converse with them often; and though they did not appear to me to blend very happily in feeling with other young Christians, or to enjoy our religious services as if they were quite satisfied; yet my mind apologised for them, on the ground of the peculiar way in which their religion commenced. And with the exception of their imperfect views and feelings, about the great doctrines of religion; I saw nothing in either of them, to make me think them unfit for connection with the church.

Some months after their professed conversion, I mentioned to them, separately, the subject of making a public profession of their faith. Each appeared to think this his duty; but each of them was rather reserved. I could not very definitely ascertain their feelings; though I aimed carefully and kindly, and repeatedly to do so. One season of communion after another passed by; and neither of them united with the church. Their particular friends, who had made such frequent mention of their conversion, as if it were more worthy of mention than the conversion of scores of sinners around them, and who had so much rejoiced in their conversion, and had been so confident of its reality; began to be very silent about them. I found that their confidence in them was shaken.

Within a year from the time when they professed to have turned to Christ, the younger man had become entirely

careless of religion ; and, so far as I know, continues so to this day.

The other one was a little more steadfast. But within three years, he had become an intemperate man, and shame and a torment to his family ; and the last I heard of him, he was a drunkard ! He had ceased to attend divine worship on the Sabbath ; family prayer was abandoned ; his children were neglected ; and his broken-hearted wife, with prayer for him still on her lips, but almost without hope that God would hear, was fast bending downwards towards the grave, the only remaining spot of an earthly rest !

Mere excitements of mind on the subject of religion, however powerful, unless they arise from the known truth of God, are never safe. Excitement, however sudden or great, is not to be feared or deprecated, if it is originated simply by the truth, and will be guided by the truth. All other excitements are pernicious. It is easy to produce them, but their consequences are sad. A true history of spurious revivals would be one of the most melancholy books ever written.

The great leading doctrines of Christianity are the truths which the Holy Spirit employs, when he regenerates souls. If young converts are really ignorant on such points, not having experimentally learnt them, they are only converts to error and deception. It is not to be expected, perhaps not to be desired, that young Christians should understand doctrines scholastically, or theologically, or metaphysically. But if they are Christians indeed, it is probable that their mind will be *substantially* right, on such doctrines as human sinfulness, divine sovereignty, atonement, justification by faith in Jesus Christ, regeneration by the special power of the Holy Spirit, and the constant need of divine aid. God's children all have the same image, and same superscription—the family mark. Heaven has but one mould. “Beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image.”

The Fast Step.

FOR the purpose of learning as much as possible, about the workings of the human heart, I have been accustomed, in conversing with those who have been led to indulge a hope in Christ, to ask them questions, whose answers might be beneficial to me, in my intercourse with others, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." It is not probable that the consciousness of such persons will always be very extensive. Some are not likely to recollect the processes of their own mind. But it is probable that such consciousness will have much truth in it; and that thereby we may sometimes get a clear understanding of the operations of the Holy Spirit, and of the difficulties or errors, which keep sinners from repentance. On this matter, the conceptions of an uneducated or an ignorant man are not worthy of so much regard probably, as those of a well-trained and discriminating mind. Fana-ticism will soon expose itself, when its own consciousness is appealed to, and is compared with the truth of God.

To those who have recently indulged a religious hope, I have many times put such a question as this;—what kept you so long from Christ?—or, what was your hindrance?—or, what were you trying to do, in all that time, while you were so anxious about religion, and had not attained the hope you have now? I have never received but two answers to that question. The answers, indeed, in the form or words of them have been various; but they might all be reduced to two in substance, if not to one.

A highly educated man, a fine scholar and a very careful thinker, gave me one of them;—a man, at that time an officer in one of our colleges, and who afterwards filled an

important station in a public institution, as a man of science. He had been for some weeks very anxious and prayerful. He had often sought conversation with me, and I had told him all the truth of God, and his own duty, as well as I could. Very manifestly he had disliked, if he had not disbelieved what I said to him, in respect to prayer and a sinner's dependence upon the Holy Spirit. On one occasion, after I had been urging upon his heart and conscience some of the fundamental and plain truths of the gospel, he said to me; "this is too doctrinal." I therefore concluded, that just such doctrinal instruction and urgency were the very things his case required, and continued ever afterwards to employ them when I conversed with him. At another time, he stated to me the speculative preferences and habits of his own mind; and expressed his opinion, that such a mind needed "views of truth adapted to its calibre," as he expressed it. I therefore took pains, ever afterwards, to simplify everything as much as possible, and talk to him as I would talk to any unlettered man or to a child. When I referred to the scriptures and quoted their language in its connection, and showed how one passage was explained by another, and how the truths I urged upon him were perfectly consistent with all the other scriptures, and how these truths of God must not be set aside in our experience, but that our religious experience must mainly consist in experiencing just these doctrines or truths of God; he became silent, but I did not think he was satisfied. He appeared convinced, but not in the least relieved.

After he had reached a different state of mind, he came to me again; and stated to me his views and feelings, with a clearness, that I have seldom known equalled. His mind seemed as light as day. "Faith is the great thing," said he. "Simplicity is better than speculation." After conversing with him for a time, I thought I should like to know, how such a clear and strong mind would judge in respect to the hindrances which keep convicted sinners from salvation. I therefore said to him:—

"You have been a long time attentive to religion; what hindered you, that you did not come to repentance before?"

—Says he,

"Allow me to tell you about myself. I have studied religion for years. It is no new subject to me. Three or four times before now, I have had my attention arrested, and have been over all this process of conviction, and prayer, and anxiety, everything, but the last step."

"What was *that step*?" said I.

"Giving up all to God!" was his emphatic reply. He then went on to say: "I was like a man trying to climb over a rail fence. I went up one rail, and then another, and another, till I got to the top; and then got down again and went on the same side as before. That has always been the way with me, before now. But now, I hope I have got over. I have been brought to give up all to God."

"What do you mean by giving up all to God?"

"I mean," said he, "consenting to let him rule; to let him do with me as he pleases, and trust him to do everything for me through Jesus Christ."

"How came you to get over the fence now?"

"Because *I* gave up all, and *God* took me over."

This was his consciousness. So far as he could himself understand the process of conversion, the turning point lay just here,—"*I* gave up all to God."

All true converts may not be conscious of any special act of the Holy Spirit in their regeneration. Minds are not all equally discriminating. Some are confused in respect to what passes within them. But with discriminating minds there will ordinarily be the clear impression, that something has been done for the soul beyond its own power. This impression, indeed, is no unfit test in every case of religious hope. If it is entirely wanting, we may well doubt the reality of the believed conversion. No matter how it is expressed. The words are nothing. But

the thing is essential. The Holy Spirit is the Author of regeneration, and why should not the subject of his operations be expected to have a consciousness, that a power beyond his own has acted for him? and has done for him, what was never done before? That "effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit," has ordinarily constituted one of the things which true converts have learned by their own experience. In some way or another, this idea will come out, as they are giving a reason for the hope that is in them. "He sent from above; he took me; he drew me out of the deep waters, and established my goings upon the rock." Moral suasion experience is a very suspicious sort of experience. There is a better kind:—"I gave up all to God, and *he* took me over."

And more. Impenitent sinners need to be convinced of their dependence on a power beyond their own. They need this especially. It is an essential point. Such a conviction will tend to drive them off from their miserable self-reliances. It will never put them at rest, but lead them to work, to prayer. Aside from such a conviction, they will be ignorant of the extent of their depravity; their seriousness will lack depth; and their seeking lack earnestness. The just sense of the amount of their criminality for continuing in their impenitence cannot be brought home to their hearts, unless the doctrine of their dependence helps to bring it there.

The Holy Spirit is their offered aid; and surely that aid is enough. They should know, and feel it to their heart's core, that they are now, on the spot, to-day, under the most solemn obligations to repent, not only because sin is wrong, but because God offers them the aids of the Holy Spirit; "in me is thy help." Their impenitence not only tramples under foot the blood of the covenant, but also does despite to the Spirit of Grace.*

* It is very true that every truly regenerated person must be convinced that the change has been wrought by the power of the Spirit, but it does not follow that we should at the time be able to discriminate between the operations of the Spirit and the workings of our own minds.—ED.

The Persecuted Wife.

Just before one of our seasons of communion, I called upon a woman whom I had often seen, and who for some months had entertained a hope in Christ, to have some conversation with her in reference to her uniting with the church. She thought such a step to be her duty; for she believed the Holy Spirit had renewed her heart, and Christ had accepted her. She delighted in faith to repose upon him; and she said it would rejoice her heart to come to his table, and try to honour a Saviour, whom she had neglected for so many years.

But she feared her husband would oppose it. He was somewhat intemperate, and when intoxicated, tyrannical. She wished to unite with the church, but she did not wish him to know it. He seldom attended public worship, and cared and said so little about religion, that she deemed it quite probable he would never know anything about it, if she should make a public profession of her faith. She proposed, therefore, to unite with the church, but to keep it a secret from him.

To this proposal, I could not consent. I explained to her why I could not. There were several reasons. He was her husband, whom she was bound to honour. And though there might be much in him which she could not respect, his irregular life and his opposition to religion, still she was bound to treat him kindly. If she should unite with the church without his knowledge; he would be more likely, as soon as he knew it, to be offended and treat her unkindly, and to have his opposition to religion increased. She must not be ashamed of Christ, or fear to do her duty in the face of all opposition. And if she had

sullen, but he did not treat me with any special rudeness. I mentioned to him the altered feelings of his wife; and expressed my hope, that he would himself give immediate and prayerful attention to his salvation. I solemnly assured him, that without being born again he could not see the kingdom of God; and that though he had neglected it so long, salvation was still within his reach. But that he would soon be on the down-hill of life, even if God should spare him, of which he had not an item of security. To die as he was, would be dreadful. And if he would seek God, like his wife, they would live together more happily for themselves, and would set an example for their numerous children, which certainly would be beneficial to them, and be fondly remembered by them, when he and his wife were gone to the grave.

He heard all this in silence; but did not seem to be much affected by it, beyond an occasional sigh, while I was speaking. When I arose to depart, he coldly took leave of me.

Before the next season of communion arrived, I called upon his wife, expecting to find her prepared to confess Christ before men. She had seen that her husband did not treat *me* as he had sworn to do; and I thought she would be convinced by that, that there was nothing to be feared, if she should unite with the church, as she steadily maintained it was her duty to do. But I was disappointed. She seemed more determined than ever to yield to her husband's wishes. "He has dreadfully threatened me," says she.

"And will you obey his threats, and disobey what you yourself say is the command of Christ?"

"I do know it is my duty. I feel it. The Testament makes it plain in Jesus Christ's own words. But we are poor people. I am a poor woman, without friends, dependent upon the daily labour of my husband, for myself and my children. He says he will not live with me a single day after I join the church; and I don't know what will become of me and the children. The most of them

are very young. I have eight of them, and the oldest is not sixteen. And what would become of this baby, if I had no house or home?"

As she said this, she was holding the little thing in her arms, and the tears gushed from her eyes, and fell in quick drops upon its little cheek.—The scene was too much for me. I turned away, and wept.

But repressing my emotions, I said to her:—"My dear friend, I am sorry for you. But I do not fear for you. Do whatever you seriously deem your duty, and God will take care of you. Your husband will do no such thing as he threatens. He will *not* leave you. He will *not* turn you out of the house. He will *not* drive you and the children into the street. If he should, remember 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Ye cannot serve two masters. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Every man that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' Such are some of the solemn words of Christ. I cannot alter them. It is your solemn duty to weigh them well. They appear to have been uttered for just such cases as yours. In the first ages of Christianity they were obeyed. Men and women became even martyrs for Christ. I do not know what God may call *you* to endure—not martyrdom, I believe; but if he should, it were better for you to die a thousand deaths, than to dishonour and disobey your Lord. My heart bleeds for you, but I cannot help you. Go to your God.

Cast your burden upon him. Pour out your heart to him. I have told you before, that I do not believe your husband will execute one of his threats. But if you cannot have faith in God, and obey his commands, come what may, do not think yourself a Christian. 'My sheep hear my voice. They follow me.' If you do not believe it to be your *duty* to come to the Lord's table—"

"Oh," said she, (interrupting me, and sobbing as if her heart would break,) "I *know* it is a duty. It is my duty. Christ has commanded me."

"Well, will you obey him?"

She did not answer. She could not. She seemed crushed beneath a burden she was unable to bear, and continued to weep bitterly.

"I will leave you," said I. "I will not even pray with you now. You are the one to pray. You can pray better than I can, on this occasion; and God will hear you."

I left her. That communion season passed by, and another, and still another. She was still undecided. I mentioned the subject to her more than once; and on one occasion she told me she did not any longer fear *anything* on her own account, for she could herself bear death even; but it was her fear about her children that kept her from her duty.

"God can take better care of them than you can," said I.

It appeared to me to be no part of my duty to urge her to unite with the church. I never had done so. I believed God would teach her her duty, as she prayed for the Holy Spirit. But I often exhorted her to learn her duty from her Bible, and by prayer; and when she had learnt it, to do it in good faith; and fear nothing. And she always affirmed, she knew her "duty to be, to confess Christ before the world."

Nearly a year after I had contrived to meet her husband at his house, when he had threatened to put me out of the house, if I came there; she sent for me. I went. Immediately after I entered her house she said to me:—

"I have made up my mind to join the church, if you are willing to receive me. I know I ought to have done it before, but my faith was weak. I could not endure the thought of what is to come upon me and my children. After I got over all fear on my own account, I still feared for them. And even now I am afraid my faith will fail me, when the communion day comes. But if you are willing to receive me, and God will give me strength, I will go forwards where my Saviour commands," I said to her:—

"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

"Precious promise!" said she; "blessed promise! God has said it, and I can trust him."

She appeared very solemn indeed, but not unhappy. She said she expected all that her husband had threatened; but she had for months been thinking of the words of Christ, which I had quoted to her; and she could not hesitate any longer. "He gave his life for me," said she; "and shall I not give my worthless life for him, if he asks it?"

I told her I had no more to say to her, than I had said so often before. But she must tell her husband, that I had been there, and that she was going to obey the dying command of Christ. "You may tell him, that you have done your duty to him and to the children, as well as you could, and intend to continue to do it, as a good wife and mother ought." But she need not reason with him at all, if he made any opposition. She must not dispute or argue. And I would call to see her the Saturday before the communion Sabbath.

I did so. She informed me that she had done as I advised her. She told her husband what she meant to

do; and he replied very sullenly :—"Well, you know what I told you. Not a day shall you stay in this house after you join that church! I *will not* live with you—not a day."

I told her to repeat the same thing to him again that night. I afterwards learnt that she did; and he merely replied :—"You know what I told you—and *I'll do it!*"

Their house was situated too far from the church for her to walk; and some one must take care of the children, while she was absent at church. It was now Saturday. I engaged a conveyance for her to church, and procured a woman to take care of her children on the Sabbath.

She retired to bed on Saturday night, with a heavy heart. The thought would come over her mind, time after time, that she had spent her last day of peace—that before another night should come, her family would be broken up, and she and her children separated, perhaps for ever, without a home, and without a friend to lean upon. She could do nothing but weep and pray; and she wept and prayed till she fell asleep.

When she awoke in the morning, her husband was gone. This alarmed her. She knew not what to expect. He had not commonly risen on Sabbath morning, till a late hour; and she supposed his doing so now foreboded no good. She hastily rose, dressed herself, looked for him;—he was nowhere to be found. The children hunted for him, but all in vain. With a sad heart she busied herself in preparing breakfast, and in about an hour he came in. "Wife," says he, (with a sort of careless accent;) "I suppose you want to go to church to-day; and it is too far for you to go afoot. You know I am too poor to keep any horse; and I have been down to Mr. B——'s to get a ride for you in his waggon. He says you can ride with him, as well as not, if you want to go. And I will stay at home and take care of the children."

She was so astonished, that she could scarcely believe her ears. She hesitated for a moment; but as the truth

burst upon her, she threw her arms around his neck, and wept like a child. He wept too. But he aimed to conceal it; and making some expression about breakfast, as if to divert his own thoughts, he said he "would go back and tell Mr B. that she would ride with him."

She did ride with him. Her husband stayed at home and took care of the children. When she returned in the afternoon, he met her pleasantly; and when in the evening she told him, (as I had directed her to do,) that she had been at the Lord's table; he merely replied in an affectedly careless manner,—“Well, what of that?”

Ever after that time, he made no opposition to her religion; but would take pains to accommodate her, all in his power. He would procure some means for her to attend church; would offer to stay with the children while she was gone; and, in every possible way, aimed to gratify her desires about her religious duties. He came with her to the church, when she presented her children for baptism. For a time he was more temperate; and we had no small hopes, that he would himself turn to the Lord. Indeed I had confidently expected it, all along. But I never knew of any decided change in his habits. Whenever I spoke to him about his wife; he seemed to be glad on her account. He said he believed, "*she* was a true Christian, and no pretender; and wished all the members of the church were as good as she." But I could not induce him to seek the Lord.

What it was that produced the sudden change in his feelings on that Saturday night, I never could ascertain. But it requires no great amount of faith to believe, that God interposed in behalf of that praying and weeping wife; and by the power of his own Spirit put a stop to the opposition and rage of that rebellious man. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain."

The Arrow Driven Deeper.

FINDING it impossible on account of the number, to have much conversation with each individual at the inquiry meeting; I at one time abandoned the practice of conversation for a few weeks, and addressed them all together. I found this was unacceptable, and concluded therefore to return to the former custom.—It was on one of those evenings, when about seventy persons were present, and I was passing rapidly from one to another, that I came to an individual who had never been there before. Said I:—“What is the state of *your* feelings on the subject of your salvation?” “I feel,” said he, “that I have a very wicked heart.” “It is a great deal more wicked than you think it,” said I; and immediately left him, and addressed myself to the next person.

I thought no more of it, till a few days afterwards, when he came to me with a new song in his mouth. He had found peace with God, as he thought, through faith in Jesus Christ. Said he: “I want to tell you how much good you did me. When I told you, that I had a very wicked heart, and you answered, that it was a great deal *more* wicked than I thought, and then said nothing more to me; I thought it a most cruel thing. I expected something different. I thought you would say more; and my soul was wonderfully cast down. I did not believe you. I was angry at your treatment. I thought you did not care whether I was ever saved or not; and I did not believe you knew anything about my feelings. But the words rung in my ears,—‘a great deal more wicked than you think.’ I could not get rid of them. They were in my

mind the last thing when I went to sleep, and the first when I woke. And then I would be vexed at you, for not saying something else. But that was the thing, which drove me to Christ. I now know, it was just what I needed. I thought, when I went to that meeting, my convictions were very deep. But I have found out they were very slight. You hit my case exactly. If you had talked to me, my burden would have been diminished. But you fastened one idea on my mind. You drove the arrow deeper, when I expected you to do just the contrary; and I could find no relief, till I gave up all into the hands of Christ. I know you read my heart exactly."

After some few minutes' conversation with him, he said to me:—"I want to ask you a question. I have been thinking of it a great deal, and I cannot conceive how you know what to say to each one, where there are so many. We have been talking about it some of us, and we cannot understand how it is, that you can know our thoughts and feelings, when nobody has told you. How *can* you tell what to say to one after another, when there are so many, and you have never seen some of them before, and they say so little to you?"

"I have only one rule on that subject," said I. "I aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit. If I perceive any one truth has impressed the mind, I aim to make its impression deeper; because the Holy Spirit has already made that impression, and I would not diminish it by leading the mind off to something else. If I perceive any error in the individual's mind, I aim to remove it; for I know that the error is of sin, and not of the Holy Spirit."

"But," said he, "our impressions are so different."

"No matter. They are of the Holy Spirit if *truth* has made them; and he can choose the kind of truth which is appropriate to any sinner, better than I can. I just aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit."

Said he, "I am confident if you had said much to me, or anything, to turn my mind away from that one thing, it would have done me hurt. You have no idea how much

you increased my trouble that night. I somehow wanted you to lighten my burden,—you made it heavier. Then I was soon led to see, that none but God could help me. I had partly begun to think my heart was improving. I found out the contrary, and turned to God in despair. He gave me peace through Jesus Christ.”*

* This abrupt method, however, requires great caution, or we should in some cases break the bruised reed.—Ed.

I Can't Repent.

ONE of the most solemn assemblies that I have ever seen, was convened on the evening of the Sabbath, in a private house. It was an inquiry meeting; at which more than a hundred persons were present, the most of them young or in middle life. The structure of the house was rather peculiar. There was a spacious hall, about ten feet wide and about forty feet long, extending from the front door along the side of three parlours which opened into it, as well as into each other; and at the rear part of this hall was a stair-case extending to the second story of the house. Moveable benches were introduced into this hall, and placed along each side of it, to afford seats for those who attended this meeting, and who could not all be accommodated in the parlours. After the meetings had been continued in this place for a few weeks; it became manifest, that the hall was the preferred place. As the different persons came in and took their seats where they pleased, the seats in the hall would be filled, and then the stairs would be used as seats entirely to the top, and then the upper hall would be occupied, and finally the parlours. I was accustomed to stand, while addressing the assembly, in one of the doors opening from the hall into the parlours, where my eye had a full view of all those in the hall, on the stairs, and in one of the parlours. Besides a general exhortation, it was my ordinary custom to speak to each individual, passing from one to another. And all those in the hall and on the stairs could hear every word which I uttered in this conversation, and the most of what any one said to me. And for these reasons as I supposed, the persons who resorted there would

choose the hall or the stairs. This listening of others, to what passed in conversation betwixt any one individual and myself, was never very pleasant to me. I should greatly have preferred to converse with each one alone; as there would have been less restraint on their part, and on my own, more certainty, that what I was saying would be truly applicable and would not be applied by any one, for whom it was not intended. And besides this, individuals would sometimes make expressions to me so erroneous, that I was unwilling others should hear them, lest they might be injured by it. To avoid this, I used to speak in a low tone of voice; and if the expressions of any individual were becoming such, as I feared might be injurious, I usually broke off the conversation suddenly, by saying, I will call and see you to-morrow.

On the evening, to which I now allude, all the seats were filled, and three persons were seated on each stair entirely to the top, and many had found their place in the hall above. It was a calm and mild summer evening; and perfect stillness reigned over the crowd assembled there, unbroken except by the long breathing or the deep sigh of some pensive soul. I thought I had never seen so still, so solemn, and thoughtful an assembly. I closed the front door, after all had entered, and took my stand in my accustomed place. I hesitated to speak. I was afraid to utter a word. It seemed to me, that anything I could say would be less solemn, impressive, instructive, than that tomb-like silence in an assembly of so many immortal souls, each visited by the Holy Spirit. I stood, for some time, in perfect silence. The power of that silence was painful. The people sat before me, like statues of marble,—not a movement,—not a sound. It appeared as if they had all ceased to breathe. I broke the silence by saying slowly and in a low voice:—"Each one of you is thinking of his own immortal soul and of his God." Again I paused for a space of an entire minute; for I was overawed, and knew not what to say. Then falling on my knees, I commenced prayer. They all spontaneously knelt. After a short prayer, I proposed to speak a few words to each one of

them, as far as it was possible; and requested all of them, except the individual with whom I should be conversing, to be engaged in reflection or in silent prayer to God. Passing rapidly from one to another, I had spoken to all those in the parlours and in the hall, till I had reached about the middle of it, where every word spoken would be heard, by the whole assembly. Coming to a man, about thirty years of age, whom I had seen there three times before, I said to him:—

“I did not expect to see *you* here to-night. I thought you would have come to repentance, before this time; and would have no occasion any longer to ask, What shall I do to be saved?”

“*I can't repent*,” said he, (with a sort of determined and despairing accent, and so loudly as to startle us all.) Instantly, I felt sorry for this expression. But I thought it would not do to avoid noticing it, and leave it sounding in the ears of so many impenitent sinners. I immediately answered, as I stood before him, as gently and yet solemnly as I could:—

“What an awfully *wicked heart* you must have! You can't repent!—you love sin so well; that you cannot be sorry for it—you cannot forsake it—you cannot hate it!—You must be in an awful condition indeed! You are so much the enemy of God; that you cannot be sorry for having offended him—you cannot cease to contend against him—and even now, while you are sensible of the impropriety and unhappiness of it, you cannot cease to resist the Holy Spirit, who strives with you to bring you to repentance!—you must have an awfully depraved heart!”

“*I can't repent*,” said he again, (with an accent of grief and intolerable vexation)—“I can't repent, with such a heart!”

“That means,” said I, “that you have become too wicked to desire to become any better; for nothing but wickedness makes repentance difficult. And then, you just plead one sin, as an excuse for another—the sin of your heart, as an excuse for the *continued* sin of your heart!”

Still he insisted. "I *can't repent!* I should if I could!"—(and the tears rolled down his cheeks, of which he seemed to be utterly unconscious, as well as unconscious of the presence of any one but myself.)

"You would if you could," said I, "it is only a self-righteous and self-justifying excuse. Your deceitful heart means by it, that you are not so wicked as to continue in your impenitence *willingly*. It means that you are *willing* to repent, but you cannot. You are deceived. You are *not* willing. You think you are, but you are in an error. You never *will* be willing, unless God shall verify in you the promise, 'My people shall be willing in the day of my power.' In that power lies your only hope, as I have told you before, when I urged you to pray. If you are willing to repent, what hinders you? I am willing you should repent. All of us here are willing. Every angel in heaven is willing you should repent. Christ who died to redeem you is willing. God the Father is willing. The Holy Spirit is willing, who, at this moment strives with you to bring you to repentance. What hinders you, then? Yourself only! And when you say you can't repent, you mean that you are not to be blamed for coming here to-night with an impenitent heart. You are woefully deceived! God blames you! The whole Bible blames you! Your own conscience, though you strive to silence it, blames you!—This excuse will not stand!"

"I *can't repent!*" said he again, (in a harsh, vociferating voice, as if in anger.)

"Then God can't save you," said I; "for he cannot lie, and he has said the impenitent shall be destroyed! *You* say you cannot repent. *He* has not said so. He commands you to repent."

He replied, with much agitation, but in a subdued tone:—"I am sure I have tried long; and my mind has been greatly tormented. All has done no good. I do not see as I *can* repent!"

"Other people have repented," said I. "There are a great many penitents in the world. I find there are some

here to-night, who think they have come to repentance, since they were here last Sabbath evening. One of them told me *then*, very much the same thing you tell me *now*, that it did not seem to him he ever could turn from sin ; but he has found out he can. As to your having tried so long, the length of time will not save you. If a man has got his face turned the wrong way, the longer he goes on, the worse off he becomes. He would do well to stop, and turn about. Such is the call of the Bible : ' Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die ? Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.' Other people have turned to God, and you ought to. But your mind has seized on the idea of your trying and your trouble, and you make an excuse and a self-righteousness of them."

" Do you think I am self-righteous !" said he.

" I *know* you are. That is your grand difficulty. You have been trying to save yourself. You are trying now. When you tried to repent, your heart aimed after repentance, as something to recommend you to God, and constitute a reason why he should forgive and save you. It was just an operation of a self-righteous spirit. It was just an attempt to save yourself, to have your religion save you, instead of relying by faith upon Jesus Christ, to be saved from wrath through him. This is precisely the case with every impenitent sinner. The error is one. The forms of it may be various ; but in all cases it is substantially the same thing. St. Paul has given a perfect description of it : ' going about,' (from one thing to another, from one device or attempt to another,) ' going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God ; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' One man tries to establish a righteousness of his own, out of his reformations ; another one, out of his duties ; another, out of his painful attempts or painful con-

victions ; as you just now mentioned your own torments of mind. It is evident, that you are trying to be righteous before God, through your pain and your attempted penitence. And if you should find any peace of mind in that way ; it would only be a deception, not an item of religion in it. You ought to betake yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, a poor, guilty, undone sinner, to be saved by him alone—saved by grace. You ought to go to him, just as you are, to be washed in his blood, to be clothed in his righteousness, to be sheltered from the thunders of God's eternal law, in the security of his all-sufficient atonement. You ought to flee to Christ, like the manslayer to the city of refuge, before he is cut down by the sword of the avenger of blood. You ought to go instantly, like the prodigal to his father, in all his poverty, starvation, and rags, as well as guilt. You ought to cry, like Peter sinking in the waves, 'Lord, save me.' But instead of this, you are just looking to yourself, striving to find something, or make something in your own heart, which shall recommend you to God. And in this miserable way, you are making salvation a far more difficult matter, than God has made it. You have forgotten the free grace of the gospel, the full atonement of Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of himself."

"But," said he, "I can't repent and come to Christ *of myself*."

"I certainly never said you could ; and never wished you to think you could. In my opinion, God does not wish you to think so. And if you have found out, that you cannot repent of yourself, aside from divine aid, I am glad of it—you have found out an important truth. Most certainly God does not tell you to repent *of yourself*. He tells you, that 'Christ is exalted to give repentance.' He says to every sinner, 'Thou hast destroyed thyself, in me is thy help : let him take hold on my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me. On the ground that they need it, he has promised 'the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' God never expects

you to repent, without divine aid, but with it. He knows you are too wicked to do it, that you are without strength, helpless, undone, a *lost* sinner!—And here lies the very heart of your error. You have been trying to repent, in a way that God never told you, just by your own powers, instead of trying to get God to have mercy upon you, and save you by his help. You have been looking to the powers within you, instead of looking to the aid above you; you have trusted to yourself, instead of trusting yourself to the grace of Christ. And that is the very reason why you have failed; and now you complain, that you cannot repent; while, in reality, you have exactly the same sufficiency, as the penitents around you. What has been their help, may be your help. And the sooner you are driven off from all that self-seeking and self-reliance, the better it will be for you. You are in the double error of over-valuing your own. God is more merciful and more gracious than you think him to be. He is more ready to save you. And when he commands you to repent, he does not wish you to forget, that all your hope lies in the immediate aid of his Holy Spirit. Nor does he wish you to attempt to dispense with that proffered assistance, by your not believing, that you are as utterly helpless as you really are. He does not tell you to rely upon your own shattered strength; but you have done so. And when you have failed, you then turn round and complain that you 'can't repent.' You reject his offered help—the help of the omnipotent Spirit. And for this reason, you will be the more criminal, if you do *not* repent. That Divine Spirit is your only hope. If he leaves you to yourself, you are lost—eternally lost! Tread softly, my dear friend! The ground whereon thou standest is holy ground! Let not the Holy Spirit, who presides over the souls here this evening, bear witness against you in the day of the final judgment,—'because I have called and ye refused!' You *can* repent; just in the way that others repent; just because God is your help. Trust him; and rely upon yourself no longer."

As I was saying these things, he appeared to become much less affected, but much more thoughtful. His tears and his agitations ceased ; and he seemed to hang upon my lips, as if he was listening to some new wonder. When I had done, all was hushed as death ; and in a deliberate, subdued, and solemn tone, he broke that expressive silence, saying :—

“I hope my God will help me.”

“Let us pray,” said I ; and a short prayer, pleading for God’s help, closed the exercises of the evening.

I afterwards found numerous reasons for believing, that that was one of the most profitable religious exercises, that I ever attended. Among others was the case of my friend, whose expression had drawn me somewhat out of my proposed mode of conducting the exercises of the evening. He became, as he hoped, a true believer. He stated to me the exercises of his mind, his repentance, his faith in Christ, his peace and hope, and his reliance upon the Holy Spirit. His mind appeared to seize upon the great truths of the gospel, almost without emotion. He had no ecstasy, no exultation, no joy. He had only peace and hope. He told me, that his agitations had all been useless to him ; that they were not faith and did not lead to faith ; and that he thought “sinners ought to attend to the calls of God, in a believing and business manner.” And when I asked him what had kept him from Christ so long, he replied : “I was trying to make myself better—to have a religion instead of trusting in Christ. What you said to me that night, showed me my mistake ; and I went home with a deeper sense of my dependence, and a clear view of the free grace of God to sinners, through the redemption of Christ.”

About six months after this, he united with the church, and has continued to manifest an established and uniform faith.

To cut off the sinner from all reliance upon himself, his

merits and his powers; and throw him, naked and helpless, into the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead him to Christ in faith; should be the one great aim of the ministry.

Sinners certainly ought to repent, for God commands them to repent. But in my opinion, he does not design to have them understand his command, as having respect only to their own ability to repent, and not having respect to the proffered aids of the Holy Spirit. Such aids constitute one grand ground on which his command is obligatory, and sweep away every possible excuse. No man ever did repent without the Holy Spirit, or ever will; and this is no small amount of proof that no man ever can.* Nothing seems to be gained by making a sinner believe that he is able to repent without divine assistance. Such a belief will be very likely to mislead him to a reliance upon his own shattered strength. And as to his conviction of criminality for *not* coming to repentance, surely there is strong ground for such conviction, since God offers him all the ability he needs,—*in me is thy help,—let him take hold on my strength that he may make peace with me.*

* He has natural powers for repentance, but no moral ability. The former should be pressed upon him as the ground of responsibility: the latter, as pointing out the need of divine assistance.—Ed.

A Mother's Prayer.

As I was very much engaged at one time, in calling from house to house, among the people of my charge, I called upon a young woman to endeavour to direct her attention to the subject of her salvation. I attempted to draw her into conversation upon religion, but did not succeed. She would converse freely about anything else; but on this subject she was very mute, only deigning a brief answer to my questions; and sometimes, not even that. I knew that she was greatly partial to me,—a very warm personal friend; and I wondered at her obstinate silence. On visiting her again, a day or two afterwards, I found her in the same state. About religion she was wholly reserved. As days passed on, I made many attempts to persuade her to deny herself, and follow Christ; but my attempts were all in vain. Almost the whole of her youthful associates had become Christians, as they hoped, or were prayerfully seeking the Lord. She remained almost alone; and I became very solicitous about her. I tried with all my power, to affect her mind: I explained the character of God, the law, sin, the work of Christ, the prospects of sinners. I showed the vanity of the world. I employed the promises, and aimed to melt her heart. Time after time, with the Bible in my hand, I directed her own eyes to the passages, and got her to read them to me. I marked passages and desired her to read them alone, carefully, and with prayer. Polite, amiable and kind as she was, she appeared entirely unmoved by all that I could say to her. I understood also, if anything was said about religion in the family, she would retire to her room. She would leave the table as soon as she could without manifest

rudeness, if the subject of religion became a topic of conversation. Her mother told me she would not hear a word from her on that subject, when they were alone; but would leave the room, if she spoke of it at all. She had also abandoned all religious meetings, except on the Sabbath; and sometimes she was absent then.

Finally, one day, I called and said to her;—"I have called to see you once more, in order to speak to you again about your salvation."

"I am always happy to see you," said she.

"And are you willing to talk with me on the subject of your own religious duty?"

"You can talk to *me*, if you please."

"That is not enough. I have talked to you many times, and you are silent. You force me to talk in the dark; because I cannot find out what you think or feel. You will not even answer the questions I put to you. And it seems to me, that you must deem me intrusive, impolite, and unkind, to be so often speaking to you on a subject, which appears unwelcome to you."

"Oh, no," says she, "not at all."

"Then, are you willing to talk freely with me, as you do on all other subjects?"

She gave me no answer. I told her that at present I had no time for any other than religious conversation—that when I had, I should be happy to see her; but that now, there were many persons wishing to see me, and willing to converse with me freely about the way of salvation; and if she did not wish to see me on that subject I would excuse myself from calling on her again. She made no reply, and I began to fear she was going to cast me-off entirely. I asked her:—

"Do you wish me to come to see you again?"

She appeared to be affected, but gave me no answer.

"I hope you will allow me to call on you again."

She made no reply. Said I:—

"My dear girl, I have tried to do you good: I wish still to try: I have loved you and respected you: I hope

you will not cast me off, in this way ; I ask it as a favour, that you will allow me to call on you again, and aim to persuade you to attend to your salvation."

She manifested much emotion, but remained silent. Said I :—

"It is for you to say, whether I shall call on you again, or not. I will not force myself upon you."

I rose to depart ; and offering her my hand as she accompanied me to the door, I said to her :—

"May I come to see you once more ? I do not like to be cast off so, by one that I love so much. What do you say ? may I come ? I ask it as a favour."

She wept, but she did not answer. I paused, and repeated the question, "May I come ?" but she made me no reply, and I bade her good-bye.

The next day, as I passed the house, her mother saw me, and came after me in the street, through the deep snow, and begged me to call and see her daughter. She was greatly distressed about her. She feared nothing would induce her to seek God. I told her how she had refused to give me permission to come to see her again, even when I had begged it as affectionately as I could ; and therefore I could do no more. I could not intrude myself upon her. It would do no good. And unless her daughter expressed her willingness at least, to see me, I never should trouble her any more. The mother wept like a child. "Oh," says she ; "what will become of her ! She refused to hear *me* say anything, long ago : and now *you* are going to give her up ! What shall I do ?" "You can pray for her," said I, "God can reach her heart." She begged me not to forget her poor child, and turned back towards her home, with tears streaming from her eyes, one of the most heart-broken mothers I have ever seen.

The next Sabbath evening, that girl was at the inquiry meeting. She was entirely overcome by her emotions. She bewailed herself as an undone sinner. She said she had resisted God—she had broken her mother's heart—

she had destroyed herself, and feared there was no mercy for her.

After some weeks she entertained a hope in Christ; but her mind soon became darkened and bewildered with doubts and fears; and for some years, she never made a public profession of religion. More than ten years after she came to that inquiry meeting, I took some pains to visit her. She still entertained her hope, and still lived a life of prayer.

The cause of her yielding, when she first came to the inquiry meeting, seems to have been, that *she was let alone*. Her mother had ceased to say anything to her about her salvation; her minister was cast off; her companions had ceased to solicit her attention to her religious duties. She was left to herself. Nothing opposed her. And she found she was opposing God.

The Holy Spirit leads to self inspection. Such inspection is just the operation of a convicted sinner's mind. Sometimes, if he is just left to take his own course, nobody to oppose him, his own conscience will be the more apt to do that office. Aside from a deep sense of accountability, there will be little or no conviction.—But it was prayer—a mother's prayer, that availed for her. That mother said to me;—"I went to my room, after you told me you could do no more, and we could only pray; and I prayed as I *never* prayed before. I felt that God only could help me; and if he did *not* answer me, I could not think myself a Christian any longer."*

* A very hasty and unsound conclusion.—ED.

Proselyting.

DURING the progress of a revival of religion, I remarked the absence of the young people of one family from our meetings, which they had been accustomed to attend, and in which their attention had been turned towards religion. They had become serious inquirers about the way of salvation. I had conversed with them. Their solemnity appeared to be growing more deep ; and I was surprised at their absence. I soon found they had been very urgently requested to attend similar religious meetings of another church, and had yielded to the solicitation. They preferred to attend there. The young minister of that church was particularly attentive to them, visiting them almost daily, and sometimes more, and taking special pains to induce them to attend all his religious exercises. He would invite them, and urge them, and sometimes send for them. One of their parents told me, "how very much interested" they were in Mr B——, and expressed the opinion, they "ought to go to church where they feel the most interest. And then, Mr B—— is *so* attentive ; they love him dearly ; the girls think there never *was* such a minister ; they can talk about nothing else but Mr B——." I replied, that I should rather hear they were "interested" about Christ than about him ; and enquired how they appeared to be affected on the subject of salvation. The reply was, "Mr B—— thinks they are getting along very well ; and they seem so happy when they come from his meetings." I asked whether they believed that God had given them a new heart, and was answered, "No, not yet ; but they seemed very much engaged."

It was manifest, as I thought, that their favourite, Mr

B——, was tickling their vanity and pride by his visits and other attentions, which were encouraged by parental influence. Through the medium of a trust-worthy friend of the family I aimed to have some influence upon them; but it was all in vain. These three young persons were sometimes in our religious meetings, but it was manifest that they were dissatisfied there; and we thought their influence upon our other young people tended more to levity than solemnity, to fanaticism than to faith. But they did not annoy us long. They continued their preference for Mr B——, they became his “converts;” and within a year from that time, they had thrown off all the restraints of religion, and one of them all restraints of parental authority.

An interest *about* religion may be very different from an interest *in* it. Men talk of being “interested,” and “interesting meetings.” This is all suspicious. It is commonly a mark of either fanaticism or pride, or of both. True religion is solemn and humble. And if it is happy, it is happy in truth, in God, in duty. To mislead souls is no trifle. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

* It is quite reasonable and allowable for people to have ministerial preferences: but attachment to a preacher is often mistaken for love to the gospel. A person who can receive spiritual benefit only from one preacher is not likely to get spiritual benefit at all.—Ed.

The Obstinate Girl.

THERE are periods, when the minds of unbelievers are more than ordinarily ready to attend to the concerns of eternal life. It is an important duty to improve such seasons. Having called, one morning, upon several young people, and found their feelings tender on the subject of religion, I determined to keep on in this service. I therefore called upon a young woman, who attended my church; and introducing, as gently as I could, the reason which brought me there, I found that her mind was fully set against any personal attention to her salvation. I reasoned with her, as well as I could, explained to her some texts of Scripture, and affectionately besought her, to give immediate attention to the great concerns of a future life.

She replied to it all in a very opposing and insolent manner, which I did not resent in the least. The more impudent *she* became, the more polite and gentle *I* became; thinking in this way to win her, or at least, that she would become ashamed of her want of politeness. But it turned out very differently. My gentleness seemed to provoke her to increased insolence. She found fault with Christians; called them hypocrites; spoke of ministers, as bigoted, and domineering, and proud; and "wondered why people could not mind their own business." She became personally abusive to myself; and in her abuse, I believe she made some capital hits, as she drew my character. I bore it all, with perfect gentleness and good nature; but tried politely and gently, to persuade her to try to be saved herself, let what would become of the rest of us. Whenever I got an opportunity, (for she was very talkative,) I answered her objections and cavillings, as briefly as pos-

sible, determined to enlist her own reason against her disposition, if I could. For example; she said to me with a bitter sneer:—

“What examples your church members set!”

I answered; “I want you to be a Christian, and set us a good example. You are under as much obligation to set *me* a good example, as I am to set *you* one.”

“I have a right to my own way;” says she.

“Then,” said I, “other people must have a right to theirs. But surely, you do not mean to say, you have a *right* to be *wrong*. A wrong right is a queer thing.”

“Well, I am *sincere*, at any rate.”

“So was Paul, when he persecuted the church. He was very sincerely wrong, and afterwards was very sorry for it.”

“I am accustomed to mind my own business.”

“I thought just now you were minding *mine*, when you talked so freely about me,” said I; “and as to minding your own, let me tell you, your *first* business is, to seek the kingdom of God.”

“I *abhor cant*!”

“Those were the words of Christ, that I uttered; I should be sorry to have you call them cant.”

“Oh, you are mighty cool.”

“Yes; I should be very sorry to be angry with you, or injure you, or treat you impolitely. I have no feelings towards you, but those of kindness and good will.”

“You have got all the young people running after you in this excitement, which you call a revival of religion. In my opinion there is not much religion about it! But I’ll tell some of them better. I’ll let them know what you are!”

“You may know me better yourself, perhaps; before you have done with me. And as to the young people, I am happy to know, that many of them are trying to flee from the wrath to come; and if we are mistaken about the matter of religion in this revival, I hope you will become *truly* religious yourself, and thus give us an example and be prepared to tell us our error.”

In this mode, I aimed to soften her asperities. But for the most part, she took the lead in the conversation, and kept on, with a more abusive talk than I ever received before.

I took my leave of her, saying I would do myself the pleasure of calling again soon. She replied, with a triumphant air, and with an accent of bitter irony:—"I should be *very* happy to see you, *very indeed!*"

After I left her, I thought over the interview, and studied her character, with all the carefulness and penetration I could muster. I knew that sometimes convicted sinners would become opposers, just because they *were* convicted,—being led to vent upon other people the dissatisfaction they feel with themselves. And in such cases I have always thought it best to treat them with kindness, and aim to overcome their opposition by good will, and by letting them find nothing to oppose. But I did not think this was *her* case. She had manifested no dissatisfaction with herself; and though she was "exceeding fierce," I did not believe she resembled those whom the devils tore before they came out of them.

This young woman was very rich, having a large property of her own, which she used as she pleased. She lived in the midst of elegance; and several of the expressions which she used while talking to me, appeared to me to indicate that she was proud of her affluence, presumed upon it to give her respectability, and was fully resolved to enjoy the pleasures of the world. The costliness and elegance of her dress rather sustained this idea; which was still farther impressed upon my mind, by my knowledge of the kind of accomplishments she had aimed after, while pursuing her education.

On the whole, I came to a fixed conclusion as to the manner in which I should treat her, if she ever ventured to talk to me in the same manner again. Evidently she felt that she had triumphed over me, and was proud of her triumph. Little as such a triumph might be, I was afraid the pride of it would still farther harden her; and

thus I should have done her an injury. Her mother was a member of my church. I had always treated her and her daughter politely; and I knew, or thought I knew, that the young lady supposed herself able to over-awe me. And if I should allow her to go on in this way, and to feel that she triumphed, she would probably become the more haughty, and hardened, and worldly. However, I rather supposed, that on reflection she would be sorry for what she had said, and be careful not to repeat it again. I very much hoped that she would. But if she should commence such a course again, my duty was plain, and I resolved to aim to discharge it.

Accordingly I called upon her the very next day, and stated to her my desire to have some conversation with her, if agreeable to her, very frankly and kindly, on the subject of her duty to God, and to her own soul. I found her in much the same mood as before. She soon commenced her abusive style of remark about professors of religion, and ministers, and revivals. I allowed her to go on in her own way, without saying much myself, for about half an hour. I only aimed to pacify her opposition by mildness, and lead her to speak more reasonably, and feel more justly. She seemed to take courage from my forbearance, to be the more bitter and abusive. When I thought the fit time had come, I requested her to pause a little, and just to hear what I had to say to her.

I then talked to her as severely as I was able. I told her there was not much truth, and not an item of sincerity in all she had been saying,—that I knew it, and she knew it herself,—that she knew she had been saying things which were not true, and affirming opinions which she did not entertain,—that she was just wickedly acting out the deep-seated and indulged wickedness of her heart against God,—a wickedness which I was surprised to find, had led a lady of her sense and accomplishments to forget the dignity of her sex, and descend to mean and low abuse, of which she ought to be ashamed, and would be ashamed, if she had any delicacy left,—that I had entered her house

in a gentlemanly manner, with respectful and kind feelings towards her, and had treated her politely and kindly in every word and action, both yesterday and to-day ; while she had disgraced herself and her family by her abuse and coarseness, which were unworthy of any one who pretended to the least respectability,—that, on my own account, I did not care one atom what she thought of me, or said to me, for she was entirely incapable of hurting my feelings ; but that I felt exceedingly sorry for *her*, to find her boasting of her sincerity, when there was not an item of sincerity about her,—that, as for her influencing other young people against me, and turning their hearts away from religion, as she had yesterday threatened to do, I would take care to see to that. She might do her worst, I would caution them against her ; and any slanders she might utter against me would only exalt me in the opinion of any one, whose opinion I cared anything about,—that she might indulge her wickedness, and rail against Christians and Christian ministers as long as she pleased ; I never would attempt to stop her again, for if this was to be her course, I was now in her house for the last time,—that I was sorry to thus speak to her,—I had never done it before to any person in my life, and never expected to have occasion to do it again ; but I felt it to be my duty now,—a duty which I owed to her own soul, for I had never, in all my experience, witnessed such hardened and silly wickedness as I had seen in her, for which she would soon have to give an account unto God,—that if she had known no better, I could have had some respect for her ; but she did know better, she spake what she knew was not so, just indulging the enmity of her heart against God,—that her pride would soon be brought low, and if she did not repent and flee to Christ, the time was not far distant when God would leave her to her own way, and at last she would have her just portion “in shame and everlasting contempt ?”

As I went on to speak in this strain, she at first appeared to be taken by surprise, to be utterly confounded, as if she

could not believe her own ears. But in a little time, her eyes were cast down to the floor; she buried her face in her handkerchief, and wept and sobbed as a child.

I did not heed this at all. I only continued to speak in the same manner, till I had finished all I had to say. I then told her, that I had done all my duty to her, and was now going to leave her for ever. I had only to say, that so far as I was myself concerned in her vituperation, I freely forgave it all, and hoped God would forgive it; but that I very well knew, it all proceeded from her enmity against God, which he could only forgive; and I besought her to seek his forgiveness, before it was too late.

While uttering this severe rebuke, I had stood with my hat in my hand, ready to depart; and when I had finished, I bade her good morning, and turned towards the door. She sprang from her seat, and reaching out both her hands to me, she begged me, with tears coursing down her cheeks, not to leave her so. She began to entreat my forgiveness. I stopped her instantly. "I will not allow you to beg my pardon. You have not offended me at all. If I have said anything wrong, I will beg *your* pardon." "No, no!" said she, while she clung to my hands in great agitation, sobbing aloud. Said I, "I must go; if you have nothing to say to me." Said she; "I hope you will consent to stay a little longer. Don't leave me, don't leave me. I beg of you to stay."

I did not intend to stay. But she appeared so overwhelmed, and I had really talked to her so severely, that I began to relent. I could not bear to add another burden to her heart.

We sat down, and she immediately thanked me for my plainness with her, and confessed she deserved it all. She continued to weep most piteously, and with an imploring look she asked me; "What shall such a poor, wicked creature do?"

I was entirely overcome. I wept with her. I could not avoid it. But I could not now converse with her. After several attempts I said to her:

"I *cannot* talk with you now. If you wish it, I will come to see you, when I am less agitated."

"Will you come this afternoon?" said she.

"Yes, I will, if you desire it."

"I *do* desire it. Now be sure to come. Don't forget me. Come immediately after dinner, or as soon as you can. I have much to say to you."

I left her. When I returned, in the afternoon, she met me at the door, bathed in tears. She gave me her hand affectionately, but in silence. She could not speak. Her proud spirit seemed crushed. She was all gentleness. As soon as she could subdue her agitation, she expressed her joy at seeing me. She had been watching for me, and should have gone after me, in a few moments, if I had not come. She thanked me again and again, for what I had said to her. She told me, that when I began to talk to her so plainly in the morning, she was surprised, she did not expect such an address. "But as you went on," said she; "I was confounded. I knew what you said was true; but I was amazed that you should know my heart so well. I thought you knew it better than I did; and before you had done, if you had told me *anything* about myself, I should have believed it all. It seemed to me, that you just lifted the covering from my heart. I felt myself in a new world. And it does now seem to me, that I am the wickedest sinner that ever was. Will God have mercy upon me? What shall I do? What can I do?"

I saw her many times after this; and all our intercourse was most kind and pleasant. She sought the Lord and found him. In a few months she united with the church. I knew her for years afterwards, a lovely and consistent Christian, and one of my own most precious friends.

This is the only instance, save one, in which I have ever ventured upon such a course of severity. I do not know

as I should do it again. I thought it wise at the time, and the result pleased me exceedingly. After she became a member of the church, and an intimate friend, I conversed with her on the subject of my treatment of her at the time, when she said, I "uncovered her heart;" and she expressed her opinion, that nothing but such treatment, could have arrested her in her career. She said, that while I was talking to her, at first she perfectly hated me: but before I closed she perfectly despised herself, and feared that God would have no mercy upon her.

There can be no question but the power of the gospel lies in its kindness and love, and that through such affections, rather than the opposite ones, souls are to be wooed and won to Christ. But kindness and love can censure as well as smile. There are circumstances in which censure is demanded, and duty cannot be discharged without it. And yet, to censure and reprove are things so uncongenial to the love-spirit of the gospel, and are apt to be so congenial to some of the worst feelings of human nature, that few duties are so difficult. None but a truly affectionate believer can wisely trust himself to utter words of severity to those who oppose religion. St. Paul had tears, but no taunts, for the enemies of Christ.*

* Let no one presume to imitate this treatment of the obstinate girl. Notwithstanding the result and her own justification of it, we much doubt its propriety, at any rate the extreme severity of it.—ED.

Conviction Resisted.

At the request of a neighbouring minister, I went to preach for him, a day or two, in a time of revival among his people. Some of those, who were concerned about their salvation, came to me for the purpose of personal conversation, after the close of the first meeting I attended. The number of these continued to increase. But my ministerial friend seemed very sad. He would put all the services upon me : I could scarcely induce him even to offer a prayer, in public or in the family. On the second day that I was there, he came into the room I occupied, locked the door, and with much agitation told me the cause of his distress. He said he was afflicted beyond measure, his soul was cast down to the ground. He had a daughter about eighteen years of age, whose mind had been serious for months ; and whose determination, to gain an interest in the great salvation, appeared to become more and more fixed ; till about two weeks before, when her seriousness appeared to diminish ; and now she seemed resolved to resist all divine truth and divine influences. She would not converse with him any longer ; and if any one said anything to her about her attending any religious service, she would contrive to stay away. He had come to the conclusion, to say no more to her ; and he desired me not to mention the subject of religion to her personally, lest her heart should be set against it still more.

I carefully inquired what had taken place, to change the current of her feelings so much ; but he could give me no information, or even conjecture. He had tried in vain to ascertain. I told him, I thought he might safely leave it to me, whether I should speak to her or not. I

felt inclined to do so. He objected to it, but finally left it to me; "for," says he, "she will give you no answer, if you try to talk with her."

I met her, once or twice, for a moment, in the course of the forenoon, as we casually came together in the hall or parlour. She did not go to church. After dinner, I seized an opportunity in the parlour to talk with her; but I said nothing about religion. Afterwards I saw her in the garden, and joined her in a walk there. But while I aimed to become acquainted with her, and aimed to please her, I said nothing about religion. She stayed away from religious worship in the afternoon. She did not appear to avoid me any longer. After tea, she came into the parlour, where I was sitting alone; and we had a very pleasant interview for half an hour. Not a word was said on the subject of religion; only she told me, she believed she "would go to church in the evening."

"Well now," said I, "you can do me a favour. It is difficult for me to know what sermons to preach, away from home. I will bring down my bundle, and get you to look at the texts and the titles, and tell me which one to preach."

Without waiting for an answer, I went for them. When I returned, I put them into her hands familiarly, and asked her to choose. She looked a little confused; but I went on talking familiarly about the sermons, and finally asked which she would have. After some little urgency necessary to my purpose, because she modestly declined making any selection, she handed me one, saying, "I should like to hear *that one*."

"Oh!" said I, "I beg your pardon for giving you *that*. I preached that this afternoon. However, it is all the better; for if you wish to hear it, perhaps, you will allow me the pleasure of reading it to you, at home."

"I should be glad to hear it," said she, with a smile, "but I cannot trouble you to do that for me."

"Ah," said I, "that is your polite way of getting rid of listening to a dull composition. But you are right: I will not bore you with it."

"Indeed, I should not consider it a *bore*."

"You are a very rash girl to say that, before you have tried it,—‘Let not him that putteth on the harness boast himself, as he that putteth it off.’—But see here,—you and I must be a good deal *alike*. The very sermon *I* chose for the afternoon, *you* chose for the evening. You are only half a day behind me. You must try to catch up. I know we can walk together, and not quarrel,—we think so much alike.—But choose me another—any one you select I will preach."

Said she, "I am afraid it will be a foolish selection."

"Well, now! that is a pretty compliment to my sermons!—‘a *foolish* selection!’"

She laughed at this, but answered:—

"I did not mean the *sermon* would be foolish."

"Well, foolish or not, I must preach some one of them; so, please to tell me which."

She chose one. And I apologized for being so impolite as to leave her alone, by telling her that I must read it over before going to the pulpit.

By this time we had become quite familiar. Her reserve had worn off, and she appeared to feel at ease in my presence. It seemed to me, that it was about time to name the subject of religion to her; but on the whole, I concluded to wait another day, and see if she would not *herself* commence conversation on that subject, which I should much prefer.

She attended church in the evening, appeared just as usual, and the next day, morning and afternoon, she attended and heard my sermons. I kept up my acquaintance with her at home, got her to select sermons for me, and tell why she selected the particular ones she chose, and debated the matter with her, whether she had hit on the right ones, for the object she had in view. This was the mode by which I first got a glimpse of the state of her mind. I became much interested in her. Her quickness of mind, her taste and refinement, her fine education and her amiability, together with an air of pensiveness, which hung around her, and seemed to creep over her unbidden,

made me feel attached to her as a friend, and ready to sympathize in all she felt.

As she started to go to church, in the evening, I motioned her father out of the way, and gave her my arm. She seemed surprised, for she had evidently intended to avoid me. We had about a half a mile to walk; and as she had started before the fit time, there was full liberty for us to walk very leisurely.

I immediately commenced speaking to her on the things of the gospel, in the most delicate and affectionate manner that I could. At first she was mute, but in a few minutes she told me frankly all about her feelings. She said, that she had been very much interested about her salvation, but her interest was all gone. She had ceased to pray. She had become disgusted; and she supposed the Holy Spirit had left her. At any rate, she felt no concern now, as she had done for many weeks, when she was sensible of her sin; and for some days, she had not allowed any one to speak to her on the subject.

"Perhaps," said I, "you did not wish *me* to mention it. If you are *unwilling* to hear me, just say so, and I will be still. But I have become attached to you, as a friend; you have interested me very much; and if the thing *is* allowable, I should like to ask what disgusted you with religion."

"I would rather not tell."

"I wish you *would* tell me. I give you my promise, that all you say to me shall be sacredly confidential; and I assure you I will treat you kindly, and you may speak to me *anything* you think or feel."

"I *was* very anxious for a while, but I am not now; and you would think me foolish, if I should tell you what disgusted me."

"Not at all," said I. "I shall think you dislike and distrust *me*, if you *don't* tell."

"Well," said she, "it was what a young man said to me. He belongs to college. He was here a few days, attended prayer meetings, and sometimes made addresses, as he is going to be a minister; and one day, when he

asked me about my feelings and I told him, he talked to me very harshly, because I had not come to repentance, and said that his prayers for me would sink me deeper in hell."

"And what did you say to that?"

"I told him, I hoped, then, he would not pray for me."

"That was right," said I, "that was right. I thank you for saying it. You taught him a good lesson. He had no business to be talking to you in that manner. If you took that for an example of religion, it is no wonder that you were disgusted. I am sure, it sounds disgusting to me."

"And then," said she, "after I told him *that*, he became still worse in his language. He told me I was the vilest creature on earth—he wondered I was not in hell—and I should be there soon. I was disgusted and angry, when he said a great many such things to me. I would not attend the prayer meeting afterwards, where he was. I thought, if that was the way and feeling of religion, I would have nothing to do with it; and since that, I have thought but little about it."

"When he told you that you would soon be in hell, what did you say to him?"

"I said it was well for me, that *he* could not send me there."

"Very well. I am glad you said it. It will do him good, if he has sense enough to profit by it. You have done rightly. *He* was in fault, not *you*. He is probably a proud, silly, impudent young man."

"I think so," said she. "And I was amazed to hear my father speak so very highly of him, and commend his faults, as I thought them."*

I then reasoned with her on the impropriety of her being influenced at all, by *anything* that such a heartless young man could say: and the impropriety of judging of *religion*, by such a specimen of *irreligion*: for surely, his *talk* was anything but religion, be his heart what it might. I besought her to take her own way, the way of her own

* His great fault was mistaking rudeness and coarseness for faithfulness.
—Ed.

conscience and good sense, uninfluenced by any man or minister on earth. I told her to think of it, how she was manifestly wrong, in being influenced as she had been. She said she knew it was wrong. I then besought her to seek the Lord now, as she very well knew she ought to do ; and not regard what *I* said or anybody else said ; but follow her own reason, look to God, and he would bless her. She said she would candidly think of it.

By this time we had reached the door of the church. I preached the sermon she had selected. Before pronouncing the blessing, I came down from the pulpit to the desk below, and invited all those who had no hope in Christ, and were willing to begin now to seek God prayerfully, to remain in their seats after the blessing was pronounced, for I had something more to say to them. I made an address to all unconverted persons, on the duty of seeking God now ; and besought every one of them, not to be influenced by anything but a sense of their duty to Christ and their own souls. And to furnish them a little time more for making up their mind deliberately, whether they would seek the Lord or not ; I proposed to sing a hymn which I would read, and make some few remarks, as I read it. I then read the hymn :—

“ Come, humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve ;
Come, with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve ;

“ I’ll go to Jesus, though my sin
Has like a mountain rose,
I know his courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.”

“ ‘ Choose ye this day whom ye will serve ; if the Lord be God, follow him ; if Baal, then follow him. Go thee one way or the other. Now is the accepted time : now is the day of salvation.’ ”

“ Prostrate I’ll lie before his throne,
And there my guilt confess ;
I’ll tell him I’m a wretch undone
Without his pardoning grace ! ”

“ ‘ The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost : ’—lost sinners ! lost ! lost to holiness !

lost to God ! lost to happiness ! lost to heaven !—lost !—lost !—lost !

“ ‘ Perhaps, he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer,—’

“ ‘ Perhaps ?’—There is *no* ‘ perhaps ’ about it. God says there is none ! ‘ Hear, and your soul shall live. I will make an *everlasting* covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.’ There is no ‘ perhaps ’ in the matter. Eternal life is *certain* to the sinner who will seek God with all his heart. The *hymn* is right. It represents what a sinner feels, when he is just resolving to go to Christ. But let him fling his ‘ perhaps ’ to the winds ! and let him *know* that Christ will accept him, if he comes. ‘ Come ye to the waters. If any man will, let him take of the water of life freely.’—Still *he* does not feel so. Hear him :—

“ ‘ Perhaps, he will admit my plea,
Perhaps, will hear my prayer :
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

“ And if you perish *there*, you will perish where a sinner *never did* yet ! You will be the *first* that ever went down to hell from the foot of the cross !

“ ‘ I can but perish if I go,—’

“ ‘ *Perish ?* ’ sooner shall heaven and earth pass away ! ‘ *Perish ?* ’ the sceptre of Immanuel shall be shivered into pieces—the throne of the Redeemer Jehovah shall sink, if you perish there !

“ ‘ I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try :
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die ! ’ ”

“ ‘ Stay away ? ’—Forbid it, O God of mercy ! Draw every one of us by thy love. May not a *soul* stay away to night ;—

“ ‘ For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die ! ’ ”

As I read this hymn and made these remarks, an awful solemnity seemed to rest upon the congregation. All was still as the house of death. There was not a sigh or a tear !

The hymn was sung; and then I requested all the members of the church to retire, and all others except those unconverted sinners, who were resolved to begin *now*, if they had not already begun, to seek the Lord earnestly and prayerfully. Those who would thus seek God, I requested to remain in their seats.—I pronounced the benediction.

My young friend, who was in the pew just before me, remained standing still, for a moment—then made towards the door—then paused, and sat down—then immediately rose again, as if to mingle with those who were leaving the church, opened the door of the pew—then paused—then stepped out into the aisle—and finally turned back into the pew and sat down, bowing her head upon the pew before her, evidently in deep emotion. As her father, who stood by my side, noticed this action of his daughter, he burst into tears, sunk down into his seat, and covered his face with his hands.

About forty persons had remained; almost the whole of whom became members of the church, before the close of the summer. I made a short address to them, offered a short prayer, and dismissed them.

As they were leaving the church, I perceived that my ministerial brother was making his way towards his daughter as if to speak with her, his eyes streaming with tears. I took him by the arm and held him gently back, till I could get before him. I met her myself at the door of the church, offered her my arm, and we walked home in silence.

I conversed with her, a few moments, the next morning before leaving the place, and never saw her afterwards.

Some months after this, her father told me, that a week after I left there, she entertained a hope in Christ, had since united with the church, and “is now,” said he “the happiest mortal in the world.”

It is important to be wise, in aiming to win sinners to Christ. The Bible is the only safe guide. Its spirit is love. It utters no denunciations against any who are dis-

posed to treat the gospel offer seriously. To lead sinners to condemn *themselves*, is one thing; for us to condemn them, is quite another. If their reason and conscience do not very much second what we say to them, our words do not hit their case.

The snares of the devil are very deceitfully contrived. This young woman was right to dislike some of the things said to her; but she fell into a subtle snare, when she allowed them to turn her mind from truth, duty, and God. How strange, that she should suffer herself to be influenced so much, by the very man whom she disapproved and despised. Such is human nature.

I have every reason to believe that this young girl was of a most affectionate and amiable disposition; and therefore, the coarse and heartless language of that young man was the more revolting to her. If what he said was appropriate to her conscience, it was not appropriate to her heart; and if the matter of it resembled the truth of the gospel, the spirit and manner of it certainly had no such resemblance to Christianity. Religion needs no such advocates.

This young man was a revivalist. He was fond of talking and praying about "revivals," and "revival spirit," and "revival measures." We have had so much of this in some parts of the country, that many Christians have been led into serious errors; and while, (like this young man,) they have adopted strange modes of expression and action, they have thought, and felt, and even prayed, just as if sinners could not be converted except in revivals; and thus the irreligious have been led to think it vain to seek God at any other time. An officer of my church once told me that he himself "*waited for a revival ten years,*" because he "had been led by the way in which Christians talked, to suppose there was little reason to hope for a blessing at any other time." By such notions about revivals, repentance is delayed, prayer discouraged, the Spirit grieved, souls ruined, and revivals corrupted! The church and the world ought to know that sinners may seek God and find him at any time, as easily as in revivals.

The Miserable Heart,

OR DELUSION AND INFIDELITY.

My duty required of me, as I thought, to preach, at one time, upon the subject of church discipline. Late in the evening of the day on which the sermon was preached, my door-bell rang; and as my family had all retired, I went to the door, supposing some sick person had probably sent for me. As I opened the door, I was surprised to behold a young lady, a member of my church. I instantly thought some one of the family must have been taken suddenly ill, or some calamity must have occurred, to bring her to my house at such a late hour. I instantly inquired what was the matter; and I felt the more anxious, because I noticed that she was very much agitated. She did not answer very readily. She said the family were well, and nothing sad had happened. I could not conjecture what had brought her there. She refused to come in. As she stood trembling in the hall, I told her she *must* tell me what was the matter, offered her any service I could render, and tenderly endeavoured to soothe her agitation. Finally, she tremblingly and hesitatingly said:—

“I have come to ask if you are going to discipline me.”

“Discipline *you*! my dear girl; what do you mean? No. Why should *you* be disciplined?”

“Why,” says she, “you have been preaching to-day about church discipline, and I thought you were going to discipline me.”

“No, no! Why discipline you? What have you done to deserve it?”

She gave me no answer, but trembled so greatly, that I thought she would fall upon the floor. I was astonished. She belonged to one of the most respectable families of the place, was a very modest and amiable girl not twenty years old, and I had never heard a syllable against her. I could not induce her to take a seat in the parlour, nor could I persuade her to tell me why she had thought that she was to be disciplined. I assured her, that I had never thought of such a thing—had never heard a lisp against her, and kindly intreated her to tell me all her thoughts, promising her the most inviolable secrecy. But she would not tell me. I soothed her agitation all in my power. I accompanied her home to her own door, and begged permission to call and see her the next day.

I went. But still she refused to tell me what led her to suppose that she was to be made the subject of discipline. And I did not succeed in getting the explanation, till I had conversed with her in private, more than once; had gained her entire confidence, and had promised her, that, be her case what it might, I never would make use of anything she should say to me, in any manner whatever, without her permission. She appeared so unhappy every time I saw her, so agitated and gloomy, that I pitied her very much. I thought she needed some friend to lean upon; and offering her all I could do, I had no hesitation in promising to keep her dreadful secret. She told me it *was* a secret. She had never told her mother, or any one else: it was known only to herself.

She then told me, that she had no religion, no hope! She knew that she ought not to be a communicant, while in her unbelief; and she thought, that I had had penetration enough to discover her state of mind, in some way that she knew not of, and was determined to have her cast out of the church. She wondered at my supposed discovery; for she had never till that moment, as she said, "uttered a word about her feelings to any person on earth."

This disclosure surprised me; but it greatly relieved me. I thanked her for it, and assured her of my fidelity to her, and the affectionate interest I felt in her.

But as I began to exhort her to seek God and explain religion to her, according to the Scriptures; I soon discovered, as I thought, that I had not yet reached the bottom of the matter. Something seemed to be locked up in her own mind. I told her so. I begged her to tell me, if it was *not* so. After much hesitation on her part and urgency on mine, she confessed it was so. Most affectionately I entreated her to tell me all, so that I might be able to comfort her unhappiness, if possible; and might counsel her, in a manner appropriate to her case.

I treated her so affectionately and tenderly, that she became evidently much attached to me; and little by little, she opened her mind to me very reluctantly, because, (as she said,) she knew it would give me pain; and I had "been so kind to her, that she felt very unwilling to give me any unhappiness, on a matter wherein I could do her no good."

I found that she was entirely an infidel. She did not believe in the Bible—she did not believe in any religion—she did not believe in the immortality of the soul, or in the existence of a God. She thought that man died and went to nothing, just as a tree dies—its trunk and its leaves and its living principle perishing together. And the failure of mind in old age, she deemed a strong indication of its falling into non-existence at death.

She had become a member of the church, when she was very young, attending school, a girl about fifteen or sixteen years old. She said she was excited, in a time of revival, as others were; wept as they wept; attended the religious meetings appointed by the minister for those of her age, (ordinarily in the school;) listened to his exhortations; was affected by what he said; had fears of punishment and then hopes of heaven; and when a time was appointed for the examination of those who desired to join the church, she went with the rest of the girls,

She thought then, that she was doing rightly, and never dreamed of any error or deception. But she thought now, that all those feelings were the mere effect of sympathy, fear, and imagination. The examination for her reception into the church was very little, except an exhortation. Only one question was put to her, "How long have you had a hope?" to which she replied, "About four weeks." This, she said, was the only question, that any person ever asked her at all about her religious feelings; till years afterwards, when I first saw her, and finding she was a member of the church, asked her if she thought she was growing in grace. She joined the church; and had been regularly to the communion ever since, a period of about five years. She had not stayed away, because of the great repugnance she felt to being made the subject of remark; and for the same reason, she had not mentioned the state of her mind to any person whatever. She had been exceedingly miserable all the time; had felt the need of some one to talk with; and now, for the two or three weeks, since she first began to open her mind to me, sad and gloomy as she still was, she was happy, beyond anything she ever expected to be. She had long felt conscious, that she was unfit to be a communicant; that there was a wrong and a meanness in professing what she did not believe; and she despised herself for it. But she supposed, if she should reveal her feelings and opinions, they would make her a subject of discipline, or at least, everybody would be talking about her, or pointing at her, as an apostate; which disgraceful notoriety and scorn, she felt that she could not bear—her whole nature shrunk from it. And this was the afflictive idea, which had compelled her to go to my house, at that late hour of the evening, when she thought no one would know it, and when she came to me, with such a burden on her heart. "Oh!" said she; "if I could have borne it, I never should have gone there. It was a hard trial!"

By this time I had become well acquainted with her, and could judge of the power and character of her mind,

and the natural turn of her disposition. She was no ordinary girl. She had an uncommon degree of intellectual power, and especially of keen discrimination. She was a severe reasoner. She grasped the points of an argument with the hand of a giant, after she had discerned them with the eye of an eagle. Often afterwards I had occasion to be humbled before the penetration and strength of her uncommon mind. She was modest and timid to a fault. Mind—reason, was her forte. She had not much poetry about her. Her taste, however, was correct, not only, as might be expected from the severe correctness of her intellect, but it was gentle and refined also, as might be expected from the amiableness of her affectionate disposition. A truer heart never beat or bled. She was all woman, all affection. A stranger might not think so; because she was timid and reserved in her manners, which cast over her an aspect of coldness. She had a fine education, moved in polite society, and was universally esteemed. The more I knew of her mind and heart, the more I esteemed and loved her.

She was now perfectly miserable. She was ashamed of being in the church, and would be ashamed to leave it. What to do she did not know; and saying, with a flood of tears, "Now, my dear pastor, I have told you all,—what I supposed I never should tell anybody, but carry it with me, (a dreadful secret,) to my grave;" she cast herself upon my kindness and sense of duty, to treat her as I pleased. "Disgrace me if you will. I know you will do right!"

Being resolved to spare no pains to do her good, if God would deign to bless my poor attempts; and fearing that her sensitive mind would be too much diverted from the one thing needful, if she should have her feelings excited by the idea that people were talking of her, I enjoined upon her to say nothing to any one about her religious feelings,—to keep on just as she had been doing,—to attend church,—to go to the communion, and not be troubled about anything but her own private religion.

I had some doubts about giving her this advice, to attend the communion. But she was a member of the church,—her covenant called her there,—now, she was going there only for a season, unless her mind became different,—and if she did *not* go, I was fully convinced, that she would become too much agitated and diverted in mind, for a just consideration of the matters which I was going to urge upon her attention. She was peculiarly sensitive. Her feelings were very delicate. She had been tormented for years with the idea of her condition. She had despised herself for going to the Lord's supper; and thus deceiving other people by professing to be a Christian, while she did not believe in any religion; and yet she could not endure the idea of being exposed, and made the subject of remark. Moreover, she felt, that it was not *her* fault that she was a member of the church. She had only done what her minister, and others older than herself, had urged her to do; and if anybody was to be blamed for her being in the church, the blame was not hers, but theirs.—I thought so too, and frankly told her so.*

In order to be as well prepared as possible, to lead her mind out of its dark and miserable error, into the light and cheering of truth; I wished her to tell me how her mind had been led into this infidelity,—an infidelity which really was just atheism; for she did not believe in the existence of God.—Her account was as follows:

A few months after she became a member of the church, her excitement having worn off, she found herself just the same that she always had been. Her mind was the same; her taste, her heart, her delights and desires were the same. Instead of finding in religion the peace of mind, the delight in God, and the love of prayer, which she had been taught to expect, "if she would go forward and do her duty," as it was called; she found nothing at all. With *her*, at least, religion was all a delusion.

Her next step was to examine into the case of her

* Still all this scarcely justified the advice to her to go, in actual disbelief, to the Lord's Supper.—Ed.

associates, those of her own age, who had joined the church when she did. She said nothing to any one of them, but she watched them. What they did, what they said, where they went, how they felt, where they sought their pleasures, and placed their affections, were all matters of her continued and close observation and study. She saw that they were under some restraint, indeed; but so was she; and she thought it was the same with them, as she knew it was with herself; consistency with her profession restrained her. So far as she could judge, they were just like herself. If she had no religion there was no evidence that they had any. "Why," said she, "do you believe that Miss Susan M—— is what you call a Christian?"

"No," said I; "not at all."

"Or Miss Sally E—?" said she.

"No," said I; "not at all."

"Or Elizabeth C—?"

"No," said I.

"Or Miss D—? or Martha F—? or Miss B—?"

"No, not one of them."

"Oh!" said she suddenly; "what have I said! I beg your pardon. I did not mean to mention any one's name. I forgot myself. I am very sorry. Since I have become so well acquainted with you, and told you all my heart; I feel, when I am talking with you, just as if I was thinking alone."

"I should be sorry and half offended, if you did *not* feel so. You did right to call their names; and you perceive I answered promptly. To *you* I can say anything. I can trust you. And I want you to trust *me*."

These persons whom she named, were all members of the church; were her friends and associates; had become church members about the time she became such; and I am sure she would not, on any account, have done them any injustice or injury. In my opinion, she judged rightly of them. I did not wish her to judge of religion, by their exemplification of it; and therefore answered her frankly,

because I could trust her, and because I knew, if I did not give her my confidence, I could not secure hers.

Her next step had been, to look a little farther. She thought of all the members of the church whom she knew; to see, if it was not with them, just as she knew it was with herself, and had inferred it was with her young companions. On this point she found great difficulty. She studied it for weeks. *Some* of these people really seemed to be different from those called unbelievers. They seemed to be above the world, to have joy in religion, to be conscientious, to love prayer and other religious duties, and evidently they were sincere. It *did* appear that there might be some propriety in saying, that such persons had a new heart. She could not account for these things, on the supposition that religion was to them what it was to her. But she remembered, that most of them were old people, who had not any longer a taste for the pleasures of life; and on this ground, she could account for their sobriety and much else in them, which distinguished them from other people. They expected to die soon; and it was natural, that they should not greatly set their affections upon the world. "You might *expect* that my mother, at her age, would not feel about the world as I do." But then, there was a difficulty—she could not believe them *insincere*—hypocrites, like herself. They evidently *believed* in religion, and evidently had some felicity in its exercises and hopes. But she recollected, that it was so with herself once; that *she* used to love prayer, as she thought; and enjoy the Sabbaths and the sermons. She had now found out, that this was all a delusion with her, and therefore came to the conclusion that it was all a delusion with them. "The difference," said she, "betwixt myself and them seems to me to be this—they have been so fortunate as not to find out, that religion is all a deception; and I have been so *unfortunate* as to find it out fully." On the whole, she came to the conclusion, that other members of the church had really no new heart, any more than she had—that they were just like herself, only, they were in a happy

delusion, which, unhappily for her, she had found out to be a delusion.—All other Churches and Christians, she disposed of in the same way—"happy dreamers," was her description of them.

The next step was to examine, where this delusion, called religion, came from. It manifestly came from the Bible. She then examined the Bible very carefully for weeks, and she found it so. Ministers preached the Bible, Christians talked about repentance, faith, prayer, regeneration, peace, and all religion, just as the Bible talked. But she had now discovered, that all this personal, experimental *religion* was a falsehood; and therefore concluded, that the Bible it came from, must be a falsehood also. The *religion*, her own and that of other people, was only a delusion; and as it originated in the Bible and was what the Bible asked for; the Bible itself must be a delusion. She therefore discarded it, at a single dash.

She then found herself entirely afloat, on an ocean of midnight. She had no guide, and no certainty. All she could do was to reason; and reason very much in the dark. And as she went on from one thing to another, she saw no satisfactory proofs of the future existence of the soul; and expected soon to die and cease to exist, just like a beast or a tree. She thought it more reasonable to believe that the world was eternal, than that it had been created; and that it would always go on, as it does now, than that it would ever come to an end. She saw no proofs of the existence of God, and could give no account of the existence of anything else; only, that *it happened to be so*. When urged to tell how it came about, that all these chance operations were such *regular* operations, and so strongly indicative of intellect and design—to tell how conscience, (for example,) comes to be such a liar about a *future* and fearful accountability, since it is so truthful about things here—to tell how it came about, that the very *ideas* about God and immortality ever got abroad among men, if they are only fictions and dreams—to account for the existence of the Bible, which told her with unerring

accuracy the very inside of her heart, as no human being could tell; she could only reply, that she had "no answer to give; it seemed to her, that she knew nothing. All was in the dark."

I then besought her to take up this subject, and reason upon *one thing at a time* most carefully—not to be afraid to reason upon anything—not to let anything go, till she was satisfied about it—and not to dismiss the matter, till she had an established faith, and a hope fit to die with. I proposed to reason with her; and would not blame her, but commend her, for overthrowing every argument, if she could. I offered to be an infidel and an atheist with her, if reason and truth would make me so; and I *promised* to lead her mind out of this darkness, if she would only attend to me. I did not care what she denied or where she began. She might deny her own existence, if she pleased; and I would beat her, till she believed in it, by the evidence of her own senses. But I wanted her to get some one thing settled first, as a foundation, on which to build another thing, or a way, by which to reach another. I wanted she should have a bog* to stand upon, in order to jump to another, and thence to another, till she got out of this dreary morass, with her feet upon solid ground. And I assured her, that my *only* doubt about her perfect and happy success, rested on the fear that her mind would *not stick to a conclusion* or a truth, when once demonstrated to her. If it would, I knew she would arrive, (perhaps not soon,) at an intellectual certainty upon religion, as clear, strong and full, as she had or could have upon any other subject. And I entreated her to commence in an instant a careful examination.

She was very reluctant to do so. She said it would only make her unhappy; and she did not wish to think of the matter. It would do no good. She besought me to let her alone, not to care for her, but leave her to her own way; and I have always supposed, that she was finally led

* One of the meanings of this word is a little clump or small mound of dry earth in the midst of a morass.—Ed.

to the examination and study I urged upon her, more for my sake, than her own. She had become greatly attached to me. I had treated her kindly, had sympathised with her; and she had found it, as she declared, "a precious relief, if not a delight, to have one human being to whom she could open her heart." She finally consented to examine the matter of religion again.

I at first attempted to convince her of the truth of the Bible, as the shortest way of settling the whole matter; but I soon found that some other things must for her be settled first.

By a course of reasoning I succeeded in convincing her of the existence of God. This took some time. She was a whole week over the subject. As I could not spend so much time with her in conversation, as I thought she needed; and as I found that she would sometimes waver afterwards, about a conclusion which she had once reached; I wrote down for her the condensed arguments, that she might examine them at her leisure, and refute them if she could, or tell me if they were not fully satisfactory. I had no need to expand them. She had fully mind enough to do all that for herself, and to understand all that they contained. I continued to do this for weeks, going over one subject after another; and she continued to examine and scrutinize, with an intellectual acumen which astonished me. She fought every inch of ground, and never retreated a single step till she was fairly compelled to it, and never suffered a weak or unsatisfactory argument to escape her detection. In this mode,—*she* first suggesting her doubts or difficulties, *I* writing for her the arguments and proofs on the point; *she* reading them, and then, in conversation stating her conclusions or her doubts to me, and *I* responding; we went over a wide field. I demonstrated to her satisfaction, such things as the existence of God, his infinity, eternity, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence, wisdom, justice, truth and goodness, his creation of all things, and his providence over all things.—To copy here what I wrote for her would make this sketch too long.—As soon as she

became fully convinced of God's existence and dominion, I insisted upon it that she should pray to him, and convinced her reason that this was her duty, and one which she ought to love. In this mode, all along, I aimed to bring in religious *practice*, as soon as I had established a doctrine or truth to found it upon. And when she made objections to prayer, which she had never attempted for years; it gave me an opportunity to show by argument addressed to reason, that her heart, instead of being as it ought to be, filial towards God, was just what the Bible says it is, enmity against him. "And here is one proof that the Bible is true." And thus I prepared the way for preaching the gospel to her by-and-by, when she should have become fully convinced that it came from God.

By arguments addressed to her reason, I convinced her of the accountability of man, of a future life and future judgment. There were some points on which I tried in vain to satisfy her fully, aside from the sacred Scriptures; such as the goodness of God, and the certainty of eternal existence. But she had now gone far enough to examine whether the Bible is God's word. Of this she became convinced in a few weeks, mainly by the evidence which it carries along with it. I preferred the internal to the external evidences, as lying nearer the heart of religion, and as constituting, after all, the real ground on which the great majority of mankind must ever receive the Bible, as from God. And when she had come to receive the Bible as God's word, all the rest was easy, so far as the reality and nature of religion were concerned. Thus, after months of examination and study, she became fully settled in the belief that the Christian religion is true.

This belief did not seem to comfort her at all. She had no hope in Christ, and was as far off from peace as ever. But her mind now rested upon an undoubted certainty; and this, of itself, was an ineffable relief, though containing no comforts of hope.

She now began to seek the Lord with great steadiness of mind. It was no easy thing for her. She had been de-

ceived once, and remembered the bitterness it cost her. She was for many tedious months an anxious inquirer, but she did not desist. She attained to a comfortable hope in Christ; and she yet lives, one of the most enlightened and established believers, one of my own most precious friends.

If these pages should ever fall into her hands, I am fully aware that her delicate and sensitive bosom may be agitated by them; but I know that her affectionate heart will forgive me for the publication. Only she and myself can know the original of this sketch.

She has told me, (I have it, indeed, in her own letters written to me long afterwards,) that if I had not addressed her judgment as I did; if I had addressed her fears or her hopes, or exhorted her only; she did not believe, that her "mind would ever have been led into the truth."—"Through my judgment," says she, "you forced a way into my heart; you made my own understanding and conscience preach to me. I wish ministers in their sermons would employ this way of *reasoning* more than they do."

As nearly as I could ascertain, in my judgment, her opinion of the course pursued with her in that revival of religion when she united with the church, was a just opinion. She and her young associates in that school were very much separated from older persons, when their attention was particularly expected to be fixed upon religion. Little was said to them in the way of instruction, but much for the purpose of impression. The great doctrines, the fundamental truths of religion, on which all safety rests, were very little explained to them. "It seems to me now," says she, "that all they wanted was to make us weep." They were not told what repentance is, what faith is, what regeneration is; the very things which children, especially, need to have taught to them. They were merely led on, by excited and impulsive feelings,

rendered the more dangerous by the quick sympathies of early life. Against such proceedings her whole mind was now fixed. And in conversation with her, the idea was often suggested to my mind, how frequently ministers address children upon the subject of religion, as they ought to address those of mature age; and address those of mature age, as they ought to address children. It is children who need instruction. It is the older who need impression. Children are sufficiently ready *to feel*. The danger is, that their sensibilities will outrun their knowledge and judgment. Older persons are slow to feel. *Their* danger is, that they will not have feeling enough to impel them to obey their judgment.

Admission to the sealing ordinances of the church, especially in times of revival, is a point of no little danger. Our ministers and churches have too often erred on this point. It seems to be very often forgotten, that then the popular feeling tends into the church; fashion is that way and sympathy that way; and all the common influences which the young are particularly likely to feel, tend to urge them forward in the same direction. Far better would it be for the purity of the church, and for the comfort and salvation of individuals; if some few months were allowed to pass, before the hopefully converted are received into the communion, especially in times of revival. I have no reason to think, that my young friend, of whom I have here spoken, judged wrongfully about the piety of her associates, whom she named to me; but I have much reason to know that her judgment was just. I afterwards sought out every one of them, and alone they opened their hearts to me.

It is a very difficult and laborious thing for a minister to deal with such cases, as I have here mentioned. It will be hard for him to find time. But he ought to find it. He will seldom labour in vain; and while engaged in this field of duty, he is engaged in the best field of study. His work then lies nearest the heart; and he cannot fail to know the human heart more accurately, and learn how

to apply the powers of his mind and the truth of God, to souls ready to perish.

It is of vast importance to gain the confidence and affection of those whom he would lead to truth and salvation. As I suppose, this young friend never would have opened her heart to me, had I not knocked at its door, with the hand of the most earnest and gentle kindness. I certainly loved her; and she certainly knew it. She yielded to love, what she would not have yielded to mere reason, or a sense of duty; and that, which began in kindness and tenderness of affection, ended in that peace of God, which passeth understanding.

It is very unhappy for us, that we have such a reluctance to disclose our religious feelings. The disclosure would often put us upon the track of a divine benefit. Convictions are often stifled, by not being confessed. Anxious sinners would always do well, to be more free to tell their troubles to some Christian minister or friend. There is ordinarily either some great error, or some dangerous sin, lingering around the mind, that sensitively seeks concealment. The communion of saints is a privilege. It is one way to attain communion with God.

Unconditional Submission.

ONE of the most distressing instances of anxiety about salvation, that I have ever known, was that of a married woman about thirty years of age, and of excellent character, as a wife, and mother, and neighbour. Her energy of character was her most remarkable trait. Her decision, penetration, and quickness were uncommon. She had had a religious education, and was now surrounded with religious influences. Most of her relatives and acquaintances were communicants in the church. Her husband had lately become a pious man.

She became concerned for her salvation; and seemed to me to have a peculiarly deep sense of her sins. She often expressed to me her wonder and astonishment that God had not cut her down in her carelessness. She thought that her heart was more obstinate than the heart of any other sinner could be. She was fully sensible of its enmity against God; and appeared to be fully determined to seek the Lord with all her heart. I thought from this, and from her ordinary decision of character, that she would soon find peace with God.

But, month after month, she lingered. At times, her distress of mind was inconceivably great. Many times I conversed with her, and in every possible way aimed to teach her the way of life. With all the ingenuity I could muster, I aimed to find out what was her hindrance, but I tried in vain. In her Bible I marked those passages, which I hoped would benefit her. She studied them intensely. She prayed daily and with agony. But yet she attained no hope in Christ, no peace with God or with herself.

I expected, that the hopeful conversion of her husband,

whose exercises of mind had very much resembled her own, would have a beneficial influence upon her mind. But when he told her of his hope and peace, and exhorted her to flee to Christ; she expressed her gladness that he had become a Christian, but her own mind did not appear to be in the least altered.

She conversed with me apparently with entire freedom, told me all her heart, and begged to be told what she should do. All I could say to her appeared to be of no avail. Her mind continued as dark and distressed as ever. And this appeared the more strange to me, because, within a quarter of a mile of her house, there had been at least twenty hopeful conversions to Christ, after she began to strive for salvation; and she enjoyed precisely the same means and opportunities as they.

As week passed after week in this manner, I expected her anxieties would diminish, and the Holy Spirit would depart from her. But her seriousness continued, and her determination to persevere in her attempt. After I had exhausted all my skill to do her good; fearing that I might have done her injury, I left her entirely alone for some weeks, not calling upon her as I had been accustomed to do, not saying to her a single word about her religious condition. Still she continued in the same way. At one time, I requested some other persons to converse with her, which they did, but apparently in vain.

At length she became almost frantic with anxiety. Her distress seemed intolerable; and I seriously feared, that her reason would give way, and leave her to a maniac's gloom. She now began to despond. Salvation appeared an unattainable good to her; and the strange expressions of her despair, (a despair which I could no longer alleviate with the promises and invitations of Christ,) were enough to make any heart bleed. I knew her endure the most horrid temptations, time after time—temptations, which I may not describe.

* * * * *

I was now in the habit of calling upon her almost every day, as she desired. I parted with her one day in the after-

noon, leaving her in much the same gloom and despair as she had endured for some weeks. On entering her house the next morning, I was struck with her altered appearance; and the first thought I had was, that her reason had fled. She appeared quite as solemn as ever; but there was a composure about her look,—a sort of fixedness and quietness of firm determination which I had never seen before. As I spoke to her, she answered me in few words, but quite rationally and calmly. There was no insanity there. I drew her into some conversation. She was rather more reserved than common, I thought; but evidently her distress of mind was diminished. She had no hope in Christ, she said, and never expected to have any. “Peace with God,” says she, “I know nothing about; but I have done quarrelling with him.” This expression led me to suppose, that she had come to the determination to dismiss religion from her thoughts. But in a moment afterwards, replying to an expression I had made, she said: “I mean to do all my duty.” I could not understand her. And after some half hour’s conversation, still as much in the dark as ever, I said to her:—“You seem to me, Mrs S—, to be, after all, in a very different state of mind from what you were yesterday. How is it? what has brought you to this?”

“I will tell you, sir,” said she, (with a deep solemnity; and a kind of awfulness in look and manner, which I have never seen equalled;) “after you left me yesterday,—and I had been praying to God, and thinking for how long a time the Holy Spirit had been striving with me, I came to the conclusion, that I could do nothing, and that there is no salvation for me! But I knew I was justly condemned. And I resolved to serve God as long as I live; to pray to him to help me to do it; and resolved to live the rest of my life for the glory of Christ, and commend him to others. I determined to do all my religious duties as well as I can, to the end of my life; and go to hell at last, as I deserve!”

“You will find it hard work,” said I, “to go to hell in that way;” and immediately left her.

She now had no hope. I did not deem it my duty to give her any hope. And it was more than a week after this, before it ever entered into her thoughts, that she was reconciled to God. All this time she was calm, solemn, prayerful, contented. She had made up her mind that she must be lost. She knew it would be just,—that God would do rightly,—and she was willing that he should reign. She determined to serve him till death,—to do all the good she could to others; and “go to hell at last.”

But in a few days it struck her mind, that she was satisfied with God; that she no longer felt any enmity against him or his law; that in fact, she loved him, his law, and his Christ. She then began to question whether this was not religion, after all; and gradually her mind was led to hope. She afterwards made a public profession of religion, and lived as one of the most determined Christians in the world.

In those gloomy months before she found rest, she was manifestly aiming, with a firmness and decision perfectly agreeing with her character, just to *save herself*; that is, to become a Christian by the power of her own will. And when she found it impossible, she as decidedly despaired. And then, as decidedly gave up all to God;—“I found I could do nothing more.” God saved her, just when she ceased relying upon herself. True converts are born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

There may be more truth in the idea which some of the old Hopkinsians intended to express by “unconditional submission,” than many of their modern revilers suppose. It certainly is not needful, that when a sinner flings down the weapons of his rebellion and becomes reconciled to God, he should be without hope; for as soon as he does this, he has a promise of God to rest upon. But it certainly appears to be true, that at that time he is not, in every case, really *relying* upon it all. He is exercising submission,—not faith. Or, if he is exercising faith at all,

he may not be conscious of it, and therefore, may have only half the comforts of it. And it is quite conceivable, that one may have such a sense of sin and unworthiness, as to exclude all expectation of eternal life ; while, at the same time, he is really "reconciled to God." He has, in such a case, exercised submission, a gracious submission to God ; and therefore, his agitations and torments of mind have ceased ; but his faith has not yet been brought into lively and conscious exercise ; and therefore, he has no hope. This would seem to be "unconditional submission," a "giving up of all to God." In this state of mind he certainly cannot be said to "be willing to be damned ;" but it can be said of him, that he does not expect to be saved.

A poor Indian, of whom I once had some knowledge, who had been a very wicked man, but who became hopefully pious, was desired to give some account of his conversion—to tell how it was, that he had been led to his hope in Christ. He described it in this way, taking his figures from his way of life, as he had been accustomed to chase the deer and the bear, over mountains and through morasses :—Said he : "I was in the mud. I tried to get out ; and I could not. I tried the harder ; and the harder I tried, the faster I sunk. I found I must put forth all my strength : but I went down deeper, and deeper, and deeper. I found I was going *all over* in the mire ;—I gave the *death-yell*, and found myself in the arms of Jesus Christ." When he abandoned all attempt to save himself, Jesus Christ saved him. This was all he knew about it. And more, this was all there *was* about it. "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great." This verily seems like "unconditional submission."—But there is too much metaphysics in that phrase, for the work of hearts. Affection, like faith, is seldom metaphysical. Its depth lies in its simplicity. All speculation, which does not bring round the matter just to that spot, is useless for all *heart* purposes, therefore for all *faith* purposes.

Doctrines and Death.

A FEW years after I was settled in my congregation, a family moved into the place from another section of the country, and took a seat in our church. The husband and wife both brought letters of dismission from the church where they had lived, and became members of our church. I soon became acquainted with them, and much interested about them. They were little more than thirty years of age, active, wealthy, and of good education, had seen much of the world, were energetic in all that they undertook; and I thought them capable of doing much good. I therefore took the more pains to know them well. They entered very readily into our plans and ways, and their aid was beneficial to us.

But it soon became manifest to me, that the wife was not well satisfied. She did not much complain, or find fault, so far as I knew; but many of her expressions, uttered in conversation with myself and others, indicated a dissatisfied mind. Whether this dissatisfaction was personal towards myself, or had reference to the congregation, I could not, at first, even conjecture. She had been educated in her youth, in another denomination, whose forms of worship differed from our own in some degree; and I deemed it probable, that she did not feel quite at home among us. I respected her the more on this account. I did not think it would be wise to let her know, that I perceived her dissatisfaction; but I determined rather to be faithful and friendly to her, and let her dissatisfaction wear off, as I trusted it would. She had never mentioned it to me, and if I should mention it to her, I thought it quite likely that she would throw off all restraint, and

be confirmed in her unhappy dislike. I therefore, always treated her just as if she was satisfied with me, and with her fellowship in the church.

As time passed on, I became more and more convinced, that her dislike had respect to myself. I aimed to conjecture what it was in me, that did not suit her; but I could form no opinion. She might dislike me, as a man; or she might dislike me, as a minister: I could not tell which. Or her dislike, on either one point, might lead to dislike, on the other. But as she never disclosed her feelings to me, I never disclosed my knowledge of them to her.

But after she had remained with us about three years; I supposed that I had discovered clearly the grounds of her dissatisfaction. She did not like some of my preaching; indeed, very little of it suited her. I could at times perceive this, when she was listening to my sermons. And in conversation with her, when she adverted very modestly to my preaching, and expressed her opinion, that some particular sermons were likely to do good, and that she did not believe some others were so appropriate, I perceived that she disapproved of the greater part of my sermons. She disliked those, which she called "doctrinal." Such themes as human sinfulness, divine sovereignty, justification by faith in Christ simply, regeneration not by baptism, but by the Holy Spirit aside from baptism, the unbending nature of the law of God, the justice of God in the condemnation of sinners, and the obligation resting upon sinners to repent, especially because God proffers to them the aids of the Holy Spirit—these doctrines did not appear to be acceptable to her. My mind apologized for her dislike, by the fact, that she had been educated in another denomination, and by the recollection of the strength of our early preferences. However, as she had not *complained* of my preaching, but had only spoken in the way of inquiry and suggestion; all I could do was, first, to refer to the Bible, and show, that in my preaching I had not given to such subjects a greater proportionate

regard, than the divine writers had ; and then, to explain to her, how such subjects were the most important and practical of all possible things, because they were the *facts in the case*, because they *addressed men's hearts*, and laid the foundation of religion *there*, in the heart's experience of God's truth, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This explanation appeared to cut her to the heart. But she did not complain.

By many things in her appearance and conversation, I was convinced, after a time, that some change was taking place in her religious views and feelings. The nature of the questions she sometimes put to me, about experimental religion especially, convinced me of this. She had never told me so, however, in any very plain manner ; and I did not deem it best to make any inquiries about it. But she became a personal friend to me very evidently, not only as a man, but especially as her minister. And she used to urge upon the attention of her friends, as I learned, the truths which I preached ; and used to urge them to "attend the church and listen to every word so as to understand." In this friendship and confidence, her dissatisfaction all gone, she continued to live in the church, manifestly a growing and happy believer, till the day of her death. The very doctrines, which she had disliked, became the delight of her soul ; and she often requested me to go to some other places which she named, and preach there the sermons which she had listened to at home ; "for," says she, "the people there do not hear these truths, and do not know how precious they are. I did not use to hear them when I was there."

At one time, a friend of hers, a young person, had united with the denomination, to which she formerly belonged. But though this young person stood in such relation to her, that it would naturally have been expected, that such a profession of religion would have been made known to her at the time ; yet it was kept a secret from her—she knew nothing of it, till some little time after her young friend had been to the communion. She then

ascertained, that her own mother had advised the young person to this step. It grieved her much. She could not think it was right. She thought, that some stronger evidence of fitness, than her young friend possessed, was requisite for church-membership. In the pain of her heart, she spoke to the old lady about it: "Why, mother!" said she, "How *could* you advise it? I think it is just the way to deceive souls! You seem to suppose, that baptism and the church ordinances are everything! I thought you had learnt better! That is just the way you brought *me* up; and if I had not learnt better, I should have been ruined for ever! And, now, you have just led this young creature astray; and I am afraid she will never find it out, till it is too late!"—This she told me herself with deep affliction and tears; and asked me, if she had said anything disrespectful, or what was wrong in such a case. She said, she wished to "honour her mother, but she could not avoid speaking, when she was so much afraid this poor young creature would be led to ruin!"

When she came to her last illness, I saw her often. Her sufferings were very great, continually. Her patience never forsook her, for a moment. She never uttered a single syllable of complaining—not a murmur escaped her; though her exceeding pain sometimes compelled her to shriek. As I visited her from time to time, for conversation and prayer, she was accustomed to speak freely to me; and after I had left her, I used to write down some of her expressions, part of which I here transcribe.

About ten days before her death, I found her in the most excruciating agony. She said to me, "I am in great pain. I never knew what pain was before. But my God sends it; and I know it is good for me, or he would not bring it upon me, so dreadfully. I do not complain. I sometimes scream, because I cannot help it. But do not think me impatient, because I scream. If I could avoid it, I am sure I would. I am afraid my friends will think me impatient, and think religion is not such a support as I tell them; but it is only my poor

body that troubles me. My mind is at peace. Christ sustains me, or I could never endure this. And, as you have often told us in your sermons, that afflictions are benefits to God's children; I find it so now. Indeed, I can see now, as I look back, that, in all my life, God has given me my richest mercies, in the shape of crosses. Very often, I did not know it, at the time; but I know it now. I praise him for it all. He sustains me. I have dreadful pain, but I have precious peace. My Saviour makes good to me his promises, as you have so often assured us he would. I find now that it is true. I believe it now, in a way that I never believed it before."

A day or two afterwards she said, "I am glad you have come. I want you to pray with me, and thank the Lord for his goodness. I am in no less pain, but I am supported wonderfully. I find that I know a great many things about religion now, which I never understood before. You have taught us a great deal about the promises, and living by faith; and now, I know what it means. Faith is everything. It gives me patience. It gives me love: and leads my heart to rest. You have not taught us too much about it, nor said too much about Christ. He is all in all to me.

"When I have a little more strength as I hope I shall have, before I die; I want to say something to you about yourself. I can't say much now. If you will come in, another time, when you can, I will say more. I want to tell you something about your preaching. It was a long time, before I could be reconciled to your way. I did not like it. I was blind, and did not understand why you should preach so much about Christ, and the atonement, and our evil hearts of unbelief, and the Holy Spirit, and sovereign grace to justify us, and prayer. But I understand it all now. And I find it all true; as I hope to be able to tell you more particularly, at another time."

The next day when I went in, she seemed, after a little while, to muster her remaining strength, and gather up her thoughts for what she called "something in par-

ticular." She said to me, (speaking with great effort, and slowly and solemnly;) "I wish to thank you for instructing me as you have done, out of the Scriptures. I hope you will continue to press upon your people, as you are accustomed to do, the Bible itself. The forms of religion are nothing. Since I have been sick, it has been a great comfort to me to go to the Bible. I can remember the chapters I have heard you read in the church, and the texts, and the doctrines I have heard you preach; and now they comfort me. Many a time when I have gone to church, I should have been pleased, I suppose, to hear you preach some fanciful sermon, as some ministers I know do; but you would come out with some scripture doctrine, and urge us to examine the Bible, and see if these things were not so; and it has done me a great deal of good. I think it has been the means—one great means, of fixing my faith just on the Scriptures, so that now I am comforted by them. If you had not done so, I never should have had this strong faith in my God. I might have got it, perhaps, in some other way, if you had not preached so, and insisted upon the Scriptures so much; but it seems to me that I never should. And I want you to keep on so, and God will bless you in it. I want you to continue to urge upon the people, as you used to, the Bible truths and doctrines. They will not all like it any better than I did at first; but I hope the Lord will instruct them to hear his great truths. They have done me good,—great good. They comfort me now. Some ministers talk about other things, such as the lives of men; but that does not do me any good, except the lives of those mentioned in the Bible. Your preaching led me to examine God's word, to see if the things you preached were so there; and I found them so. I thank you for it all. I hope you will urge it still upon the people to turn to the Bible, and find the truths you preach there. The Bible is enough. It is precious to me. It contains all I want. I hope you will not be discouraged, if the people do dislike, some of them, your humbling, solemn way. Keep on. They may learn

better, as I did. And then they will have precious promises, and precious doctrines to lead them, and not care about forms and ceremonies, or speculations and fancies."

On another occasion, when I saw her, she spoke of herself. "I am to die very soon; and I am ready to die. I did not think, last night, that I should be here to-day. I slept a little. This dreadful pain had exhausted me; and when I waked up, I was sorry to find myself here. I hoped I should have been with Christ. I would not be impatient; but I hope God will take me away soon. I do not fear death. Some people speak of it as a dark valley; and so I suppose it is, of itself. I believe the Scriptures call it so. But it is no dark valley to *me*. It is all light. The promises shine on it. They shine beyond it. Christ is with me, and I trust *him*."

The day but one before she died, she said to me:—"I took the Bible to read this morning, and I came upon the place where Paul speaks of being 'clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' It led me to think of what I am just coming to. I hope I have got almost home; and I trust I shall not be disappointed. I am now ready to go. God has been very merciful to me, keeping my mind in this perfect faith and peace. When I was first taken sick, I had been in a cold, backsliden state; and I murmured, for some time. But I am fully satisfied now. My trials have been good for me,—all good. God does all for me that I want, through my Lord Jesus Christ. *He* has brought me to these sufferings, and I thank him,—I thank him for it all. He has been with me, and kept me full of peace and joy. I have settled all my worldly affairs; and I have nothing now to do, but to think of God and heaven. I have given up all.

"I have been surrounded with kind friends,—nothing but kindness all the time; and their kindness overcomes me, and brings these tears. I have found it difficult to be reconciled to part with them, and give them all up; but I have been able to do it satisfactorily. Some of them I

hope to meet in heaven. (She mentioned their names.) They are professors of religion; and I hope true Christians. But what grieves me most of all is, that I must leave some of them, not knowing that we shall ever meet again! (She mentioned their names.) They are not professors, and I suppose are not Christians! I do not know as I shall ever see them again! This grief overwhelms me! I don't know what will become of them!—But grace is all-sufficient,—I leave them with God.

“I have always felt that a Christian ought to die rejoicing. In dying we are going home to our Saviour. Christ is with me all the time, and gives me peace,—sweet peace to my soul;—and I hope he will not leave me in the last hour. I trust he will not. I have been afraid my faith would fail then, when I come to the waves of Jordan; but I trust *him*, and I am happy to think I have got so near home.”

Such were some of her death-bed expressions.—Her joy increased as she neared her end, till it became the most triumphant and rapturous exultation; and she died with the words of joy and ecstasy literally upon her lips:—an *unfinished word* of praise and exultation being the last word she attempted to utter. It was commenced on earth, and finished in heaven.

The Neglected Bible.

IN the month of February, 18—, I called at the house of a family, which I had several times visited before. I knew them well, and my purpose was to make another attempt to do them good. They were very poor, their home was very uncomfortable, their apparel dirty and ragged, and what was most mournful of all, these evils were manifestly occasioned by intemperance. The husband and father was an intemperate man, as all his acquaintance knew, and as anybody would know by the sight of him; and the wife and mother was an intemperate woman, as I was frequently told, and as her appearance but too plainly indicated. Such they had been for more than a score of years. They had several small children, who were miserably clothed and repulsively dirty, appearing to be little cared for by either father or mother. They had one daughter, the eldest of their children, a very worthy girl, of about eighteen years, who was a seamstress, supporting herself in a very respectable manner, and moving in respectable society. But she seldom or never went home. She had left her parents because she could not live with them any longer. She once told me, that she could not endure the pain of seeing her father, and especially her mother, in such a condition as they were; and when she had sometimes gone home to see them after she left them, they only complained of her, and reproached her for her pride, because she had dressed herself in a decent manner, and because she would not consent to board at home any longer. Her mother had once requested me to induce her to return to them; but after learning all the circumstances, and hearing the daughter's touching story

from her own lips, I had no heart to do it,—I could not attempt it,—I told the poor girl, that in my opinion she was right in staying away. She could do them no good. She had tried it. She was only reproached if she called upon them. The treatment she received made her the more unhappy; and she once told me with bitter weeping, that if she went there at all, she “came away with such a feeling of shame, that it made her wretched for a month.” It was a very delicate thing for me, and a very painful one, to mention the subject to her at all; but I trust I was enabled to do it in such a manner as to wound her feelings but little, and to gain her respect and confidence entirely. She certainly gained mine.

On the morning to which I now allude, I rapped at the door, and the old woman opened it and looked at me without uttering a word. She did not even respond to my “good morning;” and when I enquired more particularly how she was, in as kind and respectful a manner as I could, she scarcely made any reply at all. She did not ask me to walk in; but as the door was open, and she did not forbid me, I passed into the house. Thinking that she might perhaps be a little disconcerted by my coming at a time inconvenient for her to see me, I told her as I went into the house, that “I would not hinder her long, I had called for only a minute, to see how she was.”

“I am glad to see you,” said she, with a low voice and a very sullen look. She appeared so different from what I had ever seen her before, so downcast and sad, that I thought she might be unwell, and therefore enquired particularly if she “was sick.”

“I am well,” was her brief and solemn reply, uttered in a low and sepulchral tone.

In order to make her feel at ease, if possible, I seated myself upon a chair. It was covered with dust; and her whole room, as I had often found it before, was so far from being decently clean, that I hesitated to sit down in it. Everything was in disorder. The floor had not been swept apparently for a week,—the ashes were scattered

over the hearth-stone,—the scanty furniture was most of it broken, and resembling one of the chairs, which had but three legs, and was lying on its back,—the ceiling was festooned with cobwebs, that had caught the floating dust, and as they waved to and fro in the wind, they appeared like a mournful token of the wretchedness, which seemed to have taken possession of her heart.

I made several attempts to lead her into some conversation, but it was all in vain—she spake only in muttered monosyllables. This surprised me. I had many times visited her before, and had supposed that my attention to her, my familiarity and kindness, had entirely won her esteem and good-will. Indeed I had supposed myself quite a favorite with her. Though I had sometimes reproved her very plainly, I had always done it affectionately, and she had always treated me politely, and as a friend. But now all was changed. She was cold and mute. She appeared very much as if she was angry, and moved about the room adjusting her little stock of furniture, as if she was too sad or too sullen to be conscious of my presence. She scarcely noticed me at all.

Most sincerely I pitied her. I saw she appeared very wretched. I thought of her poverty, of her better days, of her youth, of her children, of her sins and her soul. She was of a respectable family, and had received a respectable education in her youth. I had often thought in my previous conversation with her, that she possessed a superior mind. And now, to behold her in this miserable condition, and no prospect before her of any relief, a disgrace to herself, to her children, wretched and heart-broken; was too touching a thing to allow of any other feelings, than those of compassion and kindness. My heart bled for her. I could not have uttered a word of censure, even if my principles would have allowed it. I resolved to sooth and console her for a moment, if I could, before I left her. Said I:

“Mrs. B——, do you remember what I was speaking to you about, when I was here week before last?”

"Yes," said she, with a low and sepulchral voice.

"You know I told you that you had no reason to be discouraged."

"I know you did," said she mournfully.

"I told you that I thought you a woman of superior sense, and capable even yet of doing a great deal of good to yourself and your family."

"What can *I* do?" said she in a tone of despair.

"My dear friend, I *told* you when you asked me that question the other day. With God's blessing, if you will seek it, you may do *anything* you wish—you may be respected and happy here, and be saved in the world to come."

I paused, but she made no reply. Said I :

"Have you thought of what I told you *then*?"

She gave no answer. Said I :

"Have you any disposition to try to seek God, and aim to gain everlasting life?"

Still she was silent. Rising from my seat, and stepping towards the door, I said to her :

"I am aware that I have called on you rather early in the morning, and I will not hinder you any longer now. If you will allow me, I shall be glad to call on you at another time."

I offered her my hand to wish her good bye, but instead of taking it, she placed her hand against the door to hinder me from opening it, saying in a firm and solemn tone, "*Don't go*."

"I will stay longer," said I, "if you wish me to do so. I will do anything in my power for you, Mrs B——, most willingly; but I suppose—" (lifting my hand to the latch)—

"*Don't go*," said she, placing her shoulder firmly against the door, to keep it from opening.

"What can I do for you?" said I.

She did not answer.

"Is there anything you wish to say to me, Mrs B——?
I hope you will speak freely to me. I assure you I will

treat you with all kindness, and I think you know me well enough to trust me."

Still she did not answer. She stood like a statue of stone, her eyes fixed on the ground, her large frame slightly bending forwards, and her countenance strongly indicative of deep thought and melancholy emotions. She seemed lost in her own contemplations. I considered her for a short time in silence. She moved not—she spake not—she never raised her eyes upon me—she scarcely breathed. I knew not what to think of her. She appeared angry, and yet it was not anger. Her solemn look, fixed and indescribable, made her resemble one wrought up to an iron determination for some mighty purpose. Said I :

"Mrs B——, you appear to feel unhappy this morning. What has occurred that troubles you? or can I assist you in any way?"

She drew a long breath, but remained as silent as ever, lost in thought, or in some wilderness of emotions. I did not know what to make of her. Evidently she was sober. At first I had thought she was angry, but her voice did not sound like it, in the few syllables which she had uttered. I could not leave her, for she stood motionless by the door, in such a position that I could not open it without swinging it against her, to push her out of the way. She held me her prisoner.

I knew not what to say; but concluded to make another attempt to find what was occupying her thoughts. Said I :

"Mrs B——, I wish you would tell me what makes you so unhappy. I should think you *would* tell me; I have always been a friend to you, and I think you have reason to confide in me."

"I know you have," said she, as unmoved and solemn as ever.

"Then tell me what is the matter? What troubles you?"

"I am a *great sinner*!" said she, slowly and with deep solemnity.

"That is true, and a much greater sinner than you think."

"I am *such* a sinner!" said she, with a countenance as fixed and cold as marble.

"Yes, I am glad you have found it out; for now you will see the necessity of fleeing to that Saviour, of whom I have spoken to you so many times, as your only ground of hope."

"I am *undone for ever*!" said she, with a look of cold, fixed despair.

"You *would* be, if there was no mercy in God, and no Christ Jesus to save. But God is able and willing to save all sinners who repent of sin and forsake it, and put all their trust in Christ."

"I have sinned a great while!"

"And God has borne with you a great while, simply because He is 'not willing' that you 'should perish, but come to repentance.' Have you been praying to God to save you?"

"Yes, I prayed a long time last night; and I have been praying this morning till you came in."

"What did you pray *for*?"

"I prayed that God would forgive me."

"And do you think He will?"

"I am afraid not! I am a very great sinner."

"Jesus Christ is a very great Saviour. He will save all that come to Him in faith. The *greatness* of your sins cannot ruin you, if you will but repent of them and forsake them, trusting to the great Redeemer of sinners for pardon, through his atoning blood. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.'"

"*Will* God have mercy upon me *now*, after all I have done?" said she, (for the first time lifting her eyes upon me, with a beseeching look.)

"Yes, He will; He *says* He will. 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

"I have been an awful sinner! I am a poor creature, unworthy of anything but God's curse!"

"True, all true, madam ; but Christ is infinitely worthy, has borne the punishment due to sinners, and is willing to save you."

"I wish I could think so," said she, with the same fixed and despairing look.

"You *may* think so ; and God thinks so."

"There is no mercy for me any longer !"

"So *you* think, but God thinks differently. You and He do not think alike. He thinks right, and you think wrong. You must fling away your own thoughts and act on His. And that is what He means in that expression in Isaiah, 'let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*, and let him return unto the Lord, and He *will have* mercy upon him, and to our God for he *will* abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.' Your *thoughts*, madam, your very sincerest and soberest thoughts, are to be *forsaken*. Your thoughts are wrong. Fling them away, and use God's thoughts. His thoughts are right. You think differently from Him, and therefore your thoughts are not to govern you. 'Let the unrighteous forsake his thoughts.' You think wrong about God, and wrong about yourself, and wrong about sin, and wrong about forgiveness. I do not mean that you think yourself a greater sinner than you are, for you have not yet seen the half of your guilt and danger ; but you think wrong about God's readiness to forgive you. Remember that He says, 'Let the unrighteous forsake his thoughts.' And then, a little after, He says again, 'my thoughts are not your thoughts,' and goes on to say, 'for as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.' What does he mean by all this ? He means that it does not belong to *you* to tell what God will do or will not do. If you undertake to tell, you will be sure to tell wrong, because you think wrong. You must let *Him* tell what He will do. And He is telling in that very passage about the forgiveness which you say you cannot think there is for you : 'Let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy

upon him.' But the sinner does not think so; and therefore God says it over again, as if He would beat it into the poor sinner's heart, 'let him return unto our God, for He will *abundantly* pardon.'" (She shook her head with a slow desponding motion, as I went on.) "You do not think so, but God does. He *tells* you 'my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.' Your thoughts this minute are, 'I am a great sinner.' God's thoughts are, 'I will have mercy upon her.' Your thoughts are, 'I have sinned too long to be forgiven.' God's thoughts are, 'I will abundantly pardon her.' I should like to show you that whole chapter. I want to read it to you. Have you got a Bible, Mrs B——?"

Without uttering a word, she slowly moved from the door to the other side of the room, placed a chair beneath a high shelf, that was made of a single rough board, and hung up on rude wooden brackets, almost up to the wooden ceiling of the room. She then stepped up upon the chair, and reaching her hand upon the shelf, felt along till she found it, and took down her Bible. She stood upon the chair, and gazed upon it as she held it in her hand, with a fixed look. Then she slowly stepped down from the chair, holding her Bible in her hand, and stopped and gazed upon it, motionless, and without uttering a word. It was covered all over with dust, soot, and cobwebs, appearing as if it had not been handled for years. I thought her heart smote her, as she held it unopened and looked down upon it. I thought I could "see the iron enter into her soul." I did not disturb her. I was willing she should meditate and remember. There she stood, motionless as a stone, with her eyes fixed upon her Bible, and I did not think it was best for me to say anything to her,—the dusty, cobwebbed Bible was speaking! The tears gushed from the eyes, and fell in quick drops upon its blackened lid. Slowly she lifted her tattered apron, and wiped off the tears and the dust, and deliberately turning towards me, she extended to me the book—"there is my Bible!" said she, with a bitterness of

accent that I never shall forget. She turned from me, with both hands lifted her dusty, ragged apron to her face, and wept aloud.

I could not but weep too. It was a scene surpassing, I am sure, the genius of any painter.

When she had become a little composed, I requested her to sit down by me, and then directing her eye to the expressions, I read and explained to her the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah.

I attempted some farther conversation with her, but she did not seem so much inclined to talk as to listen. At her request I prayed with her; and when I was about to leave her, I enquired:

"How long have you been in this state of mind, Mrs. B——, feeling that you are such a sinner?"

"Since last night."

"What led you to feel so last night?"

"It was a little book that I read."

"What book was it?"

"Sixteen Short Sermons."

"Whose sermons were they?"

"I don't know. I came across the book somewhere about the house. I don't know where it came from."

"I mean who *wrote* the Sermons?"

"I don't know."

"Where is the book? I should like to see it."

"It is not here. I lent it this morning to Mrs A——"
(a near neighbour.)

"Did Mrs A—— want to read it herself?"

"Yes. She was in here, and would make me tell her what was the matter with me; and after I told her, she said she wanted to read the Sermons too. So I lent it to her, a little while before you came in."

Taking leave of Mrs B——, I went immediately to call on Mrs A——. I found her in tears. She had become alarmed about her condition, as a sinner against God. She frankly expressed to me her convictions and fears, adding with great emphasis, "What *shall* I do?"

Of course I conversed with her and explained the way of salvation. But she said nothing about the book, until, as I was about to leave her, I enquired what it was that had inclined her to attend to her salvation. "It was a little book that Mrs B—— lent me this morning," said she; and taking it from under her Bible that lay on the table, she put it into my hand. Then I discovered that it was a Tract, bearing the title, "Sixteen Short Sermons," one of the publications of the American Tract Society, which I had entirely forgotten if I had ever read it, so that I did not recognize it by the title.

After this, I often visited Mrs. B——, and had many an interesting conversation with her. In one of these conversations, she referred gently and humbly to her daughter, and not, as I had formerly heard her, with manifest anger and ill-will. She said, "I should like to see her,—I have not seen her for many months; but, I suppose it hurts the poor child's feelings to come home, and find us—as we have been. I hope we shall not always be so." I immediately went to see her daughter; and alone, and in as delicate a manner as I could, I told her of her mother's altered feelings, and suggested the propriety of her going to see her. She wept bitterly and long. It was almost impossible to comfort her at all; and before I left her, I found it was not her mortification and shame about her mother, so much as her anxiety about her own salvation, which caused her distress. She had already heard of her mother's seriousness, and that was one of the causes of her own. But she did not go to see her mother. I pointed her to Christ as well as I could, and left her.

A few days after this, I called upon the daughter again. I went to tell her of her mother's happy hope in Christ, which she had just expressed to me for the first time; and to my no small joy and surprise, I found that the daughter had been led to the same sweet hope also. "*Now*," said she, the tears of joy coursing down her youthful and beautiful cheeks, "*now*, I can go to see *my mother*."

She did go. She opened the door, and found the old woman alone. "My *mother*," said she,—and she could say no more. In an instant they were clasped in each other's arms, both bathed in tears of unutterable joy.

That humble dwelling soon became as neat, as *grace* had made its inmates happy. The daughter went home. She aided her mother in all her domestic duties, with a glad and grateful heart. She made their house as attractive as it had been repulsive. She made clothes for the younger children, and having assisted her mother to dress them up in a neat and respectable manner, the old woman attended them herself to the Sabbath school, and requested to have their names put down, "for," said she, "they will always be here every Sabbath, if you will be so kind as to teach them the Bible."

That house and its inmates were very different in June, from what they had been in February. Neatness and peace reigned, where there had been filthiness, and clamor, and contention through year after year of misery. The whole appearance of the woman was changed. She did not look like the same being. She became dignified, lady-like, intelligent, easy in her manners, and, though always solemn, she was uniformly contented and happy. "It seems to me," said she, "that I need but one thing more, and my cup is full: if my husband would only quit his ways, and turn to God, it seems to me we should be happy enough." But he never did. He continued his intemperance. I exerted all my skill to persuade him to forsake his ruinous course; but I met him thirteen years afterwards, staggering in the street.

Eight months after the time when I found this woman so suddenly awakened to a sense of her situation, by "a little book that she had read," I baptized both her and her daughter, and they were received into the church the same day. Mrs A——, her neighbour, who borrowed the book, was received and baptized at the same time. When the old woman presented herself in the church for the reception of baptism, her old neighbours and friends, who

had been acquainted with her for a score of years, did not know who she was,—her appearance was so altered ;—and I found it difficult the next day to make them believe that it was verily their old neighbour, whom they had pitied and despaired of so long.

There was nothing of any marked peculiarity in this woman's religious experience, unless it was her deep humility ; her iron determination manifest always from the very beginning of her conviction ; and after her conversion, her unbounded gratitude to God. "Who could have thought," said she, "that God would have mercy upon such a creature as I?"

That "little book," the "Sixteen Short Sermons," lent from house to house through the neighbourhood, did good service in that season of a revival of religion, which I have always supposed originated from its influence, more than from any other one thing. However this may have been (and I believe there is a great deal of foolish error abroad among the churches in attempting to account for revivals of religion, and trace their origin,) the name of Mrs B—— stands recorded in my private book, the very first name in the list of the hopeful converts to Christ in that revival—a list containing more than Two Hundred and Fifty names.

As long as I continued to be her Pastor, Mrs B—— always appeared to me to be a humble and happy Christian. There was uniformly an air of deep solemnity about her, of profound humility, and a cast of mournfulness too, whenever she adverted to her past life, or the time of her hopeful conversion. The remembrance of what she was, seems to have thrown a sombre shade over her character. Twenty years have passed away, and she still lives, enjoying the Christian confidence and affection of her church.

I have sometimes called upon her, since I ceased to be her Pastor, and removed to another and distant place. At one time I visited her after an interval of thirteen years. I did not expect she would know me. I knocked at the

door—she invited me in—and taking a seat I asked some business-like questions, about two or three of her neighbours. She responded readily to my questions, but kept her eyes fixed upon me, with a kind of curious and doubtful inquisitiveness. This questioning and answering and inspecting continued for several minutes, till I supposed that the nature of my questions had thoroughly concealed my identity. Finally I asked her,—

“Have you got a Bible?”

Adjusting her spectacles to her eyes with both her hands, she replied,—

“Ain’t *you* priest *Spencer*? Them are the same eyes that used to look right through me. How *do* you do? I am glad to see you.”

“I am no *priest*,” said I.

“Well, we used to *call* ministers so when I was young. It is just like you to come and see me. But I didn’t expect it.”

I enquired whether she still kept her “Sixteen Short Sermons.”

“O, yes,” said she, “*that* is next to the Bible.”

I told her that I should like to have the same book, and asked if she would be willing to give it to me. Said she,—

“I will give you anything else I’ve got; but I should be unwilling to spare that, unless I could get another just like it. I read it over every little while.”

She produced the same old tract, which I had seen in her house more than seventeen years before. It bore the marks of age, and of much service. It had become almost illegible by use, and time, and dust. “It has been all around the neighbourhood,” said she. “I have lent it to a great many folks; and sometimes I have had hard work to hunt it up, and get it back home again.”

I gave her two new ones of the same sort, and also the whole bound volume which contains it; and after carefully examining the two, leaf by leaf, “to see if they were just like it,” as she said, she finally consented to part with her

old, time-worn, rusty tract. "I thought," said she, "I never should part with that book,—but these new ones are better; I can read them easier, and I can lend them to more folks. Some people will read these, who would not read one so dirty and old as that."

I felt half guilty for taking her old companion, and was sorry I had ever asked for it. As I parted with her and came away, I noticed that her eyes kept fixed upon the "Sixteen Short Sermons," that I held in my hand. I hope yet to be permitted to return it to her.

There were two things in the character of this woman worthy of very special notice,—her determination and her dependence. So firmly was she fixed in her resolution to abandon the habit, which had so long been her sin, and the cause of her misery, that after her first seriousness on that memorable night, she never once tasted the cup of her shame. She would not see anybody else do it,—she would not go where it was,—she would cross the street to avoid passing the door where it was sold,—she would not even *look* at it. And so entire was her dependance on God to keep her from it, that she gave the memorable description of her course,—"*Drink anything?* no! if I ever *think* of it, I immediately go to prayer." I recommend her example to every reader of this book:—"drink anything? no! if you ever *think* of it, immediately go to prayer."*

* I have no doubt that the Tract here referred to, is a reprint of one of our Religious Tract Society's publications, bearing the same title, and written, I believe, by that excellent clergyman, the late Mr. Biddulph of Bristol. How a man's usefulness outlives himself; and how one country may be a worker with another in God's cause.—Ed.

No Escape.

IN conversation with a young man, who desired to unite with the church, he surprised me very much by a reference which he made to his former "detestation of religion," as he called it, and by mentioning the manner in which he was first led to any considerable concern in reference to his salvation. I had known him with some intimacy for several months, had frequently conversed with him as a serious inquirer, and afterwards as one who entertained a hope in Christ. But he had never before mentioned to me so definitely the means of his awakening, and his previous opposition to religion.

He belonged to a pious family; his parents and several of his brothers were members of the church; he was a moral and staid, industrious, intelligent young man, always attending church, and was a teacher in the Sabbath School. I had not supposed that his feelings of opposition to religion had ever assumed the strong character which he described to me now; and I had never known the means of their alteration. I happened to ask him,—

"Mr H——, what was it that first called your attention definitely to religion, when you began to make it a matter of your personal concern?"

"I found there was no escape, I could not get away from it."

"What do you mean, when you say 'there was no escape?'"

"Why the subject met me everywhere. Wherever I went there was something to make me think of it."

"Yes," said I, "there are things to bring it to mind

all around us and always, if we would heed them. God has filled His world with things suggestive of Himself."

"Oh, sir," said he, "I don't mean *that* at all. It is true, that *now* almost everything makes me think of God and my duty; but I mean things that were done *on purpose* to catch me. It seemed to me that I was pursued everywhere. There was no getting away. If I went to church on Sunday, you never let us off with a descriptive or literary sermon, like a college professor; you always had something about faith, or repentance, or depravity, or the duty of sinners to fly to Christ. If I went to my store on a week day, thinking I should escape *there*, because I had something else to attend to; my partner would have something to say to me about religion; or something to say in my presence which I knew was meant *for me*. If I met you in the street, you were sure not to let me pass without bringing up that subject in some way or other. If I went home to dinner or tea, religion would be talked of at the table. If I was spending any part of the evening in the family after I left the store, it was the same thing again: religion, religion would come up; every one had something to say which made me think of religion. If I went off to bed, (as I did many a time to get out of the hearing of it;) my sister had put a tract upon my pillow, I could not bear all this. I often avoided everybody and went to my room, where I could be alone, and think of what I pleased; and *there* the first thing to meet me would be some religious book, which my mother or some one else had put in the place most likely to attract my attention; and perhaps left it open at some passage marked on purpose for me. After several of my young associates had become Christians, and began to talk about religion; I avoided them and sought other company, and pretty soon *they* began to talk religion too! I was provoked at it!"

"Did these people, who endeavoured to influence you, treat you rudely or impolitely?"

"Oh, no! That was the worst of it. I hoped they

would. If they had been meddlesome and impudent, I should have had something to find fault with, and should have told them to mind their own business, and keep their religion to themselves. I should have said, that religion makes men ungentlemanly, and unfit for society, —and so should have excused myself. But there was none of that. There was little said to me. All that was done, was only calculated to make me think *for* myself, and *of* myself; and so I could not complain. But religion came up before me on all sides; which ever way I turned, morning, noon, and night, it was there. I could not escape it."

"Did you have a strong *desire* to escape it?"

"Yes, I did. I turned every way. I avoided Christians. One Sunday, I stayed away from church;—but that contrivance *worked the other way*, for I could think of nothing but religion all the morning, and so in the afternoon I went to church, to see if I couldn't forget it there. When I came home I went into an unoccupied room, because they began to talk about the sermon in the parlour; and the first thing that met me was *the Bible*,—laid open at the second chapter of Proverbs, and a pencil-mark drawn round the first six verses. 'This is some of mother's work,' said I. Finally, I resolved to sell out my store, and get away into some place where I should not be *tormented about religion* any longer. I began to make arrangements for selling out."

"Well, Sir, what altered your mind?"

"Why, just as I was in this trouble to get away from religion, resolving not to live any longer in such a place as this; I began to think what I was after, why I desired to get away. And then I soon found out it was because I desired to get away from the truth, and away from God. That alarmed me, and shamed me. I thought, then, that if there was no escape from men here, there could be no escape from God anywhere. And though it cost my pride a hard struggle, I made up my mind that I was all wrong, and I would attend to my salvation. Then

I began; but I don't think I ever should have begun, if I had not been hunted in every place where I tried to escape."

"Did you have any more temptation to neglect religion after that?"

"No. I immediately took my stand. I went among the inquirers openly. Then I was disappointed to find how little I cared any longer for the world, for what people would say, and all such things, as I used to think would be great trials to me. And I believe *now*, there is very much gained by getting a sinner to *commit himself* on this matter. Then he will not wish to get off."

"What way do you think is most likely to succeed for inducing any one 'to commit himself' to attend to his religion?"

"Oh, I cannot answer *that*. Any way is good, I suppose, which will lead people to *think*. Judging from my own experience, I should suppose that no irreligious person in the world could put off religion any longer, if his way was hedged up as mine was, so that he could not avoid *thinking* of the subject."

Such was a part of my conversation with him. He united with the church; and I have some reason to suppose, that since that time he has aimed to "lead people to think," in such a manner that there could be "no escape."

Thoughtlessness is the common origin of unconcern. We do a far better office for men when we lead *them* to think, than when we think for them. A man's own thoughts are the most powerful of all preaching. The Holy Spirit operates very much by leading men to *reflection*—to employ their own mind. I should hesitate to interrupt the religious reflections of any man in the world, by the most important thing I could say to him. If I am sure *he* will *think*, I will consent to be still.

But men are prone to be thoughtless, and we must speak to them to lead them to reflection.

But the instance of this young man contains, as I think, a most important lesson. It appears to show, that Christian people may easily exercise an influence upon the minds of the worldly; and I have often thought such an influence is the very thing which the church needs, more than almost anything else. There is many a member of the church having faith, having benevolence, and sincerely desirous of the conversion of sinners, who never has once opened his lips to commend religion to the careless, and has never in any way attempted to lead them to serious reflection. It is not too much to say, that this is *wrong*. Surely it *cannot* be right for the people of God to wrap their talent in a napkin and hide it in the earth! In *some* mode, almost every Christian in the midst of us is able to influence the thoughts of the careless every day. By conversation, by timely remarks, by books, by tracts, and by a thousand nameless methods, they have opportunity to impress religious truth upon indifferent minds. There is too much neglect of this. The irreligious often notice this neglect; and whenever they notice it, they are very apt to have a diminished esteem for religious people, if not for religion itself. A minister cannot go everywhere and speak to every body in the community, but private Christians can. Such Christians are meeting the ungodly daily, they know them, they associate with them, work with them, trade with them, and it would be easy for them to awaken many a sinner, whom a minister cannot reach. Such exertion is one *great want* of the church. There are few irreligious persons in the midst of us who are compelled to say, "there is no escape."

The Date of Conversion.

IN a very remote and rural part of my parish, several miles from my own residence, and by the side of an unfrequented road; there lived a married woman, whose state of mind on the subject of religion interested me much, the first time I visited her. I thought I discovered in her a sort of readiness to obey the Gospel, if I may use such an expression. She was about thirty years of age, full of vivacity, enthusiasm, and kindness, simple, beautiful, graceful; and when she became animated in conversation, her clear blue eye beamed with intelligence and sweetness of disposition, which flung an indescribable charm around all that she uttered. She and her husband had been religiously educated. She was a woman of refined manners, and to me she appeared the more interesting, because she evidently never suspected herself of any refinement at all. Her politeness, which I have seldom seen equalled, was not the politeness of the schools, but of nature: not the polish of art, but the promptings of simplicity and an affectionate disposition. In all things she appeared unaffected, natural, simple. She was willing to appear just what she was, and therefore always appeared to advantage. Her manners would have graced the most refined society. She made no pretensions under the promptings of pride or vanity, uttered no apologies for her appearance, and felt no bashfulness in the presence of a stranger. Too far removed from any school to be able to send her children, she taught them herself; and her three little boys, for intelligence, kindness, and propriety of manners, might have served for models to almost any other in the parish. I found the little things a short distance from the house, plucking the

wild flowers in the woods, to entwine in their mother's hair, which they claimed the privilege to adorn in that manner, and which might be seen thus adorned, according to their taste, almost any day, from the early spring-time till the frost had nipped the last blossom of the year. Eight summers had not passed over the head of the eldest. They were the children of nature—simple, fearless, artless. The frank, gentle and affectionate demeanor of these little creatures, especially towards one another, gave me, as I thought, some insight into the character of their mother. I judged of her by her little pupils, and afterwards found that I judged justly. I took them as bright miniatures of herself. And I did not think the less of *her*, when I perceived the evident pleasure and exultation (if I may not say *pride*), which she had in them.

I visited her as her minister. I was a stranger to her. She was evidently glad to see me at her house, and the more so as she had not expected it. After making some inquiries about her husband and her children, I enquired of her,—

“Are you and your husband members of the church?”

“No, Sir,” said she with a downcast look.

“Neither of you?”

“No, Sir.”

“And why not? Are you still living without religion?”

“I suppose we are. I have wished a great many times that I was *fit* to be a communicant.”

“And why are you *not* fit?”

“Because I have no saving faith. I could not go to the Lord's table without faith.”

“No, but you ought to go *with* faith. Jesus Christ is offered to you in the Gospel, to be your Saviour. Your duty is to believe in Him. And are you still, at your time of life, an unbeliever?”

“I suppose I am,” said she, with a pensive look.

“And are you going to continue so?”

After a long pause, during which her thoughts seemed very busy, she replied, with an accent of sadness,—

"Indeed, Sir, I cannot tell."

"Are you *willing* to continue so?"

"No, Sir, I am not satisfied with myself. I think about religion very often, but—"

"And do you pray about it very often?"

"No, Sir, not *very* often, since I was a child."

"Have you prayed to-day?"

"No, Sir."

"Did you pray last Sabbath?"

"No, Sir. I read my Bible. I sometimes pray, but my prayers are not answered."

"What do you pray *for*?"

"I have prayed for forgiveness and the Holy Spirit; but it was all in vain to me."

"And so you ceased to pray."

"Yes Sir. I thought I could *do* nothing without the Holy Spirit."

"But, my dear Madam, it was the Holy Spirit that led you to prayer. *God* was calling to you at those times when you were constrained to pray."

"I have never thought so, Sir."

"Then He has been more kind towards you than you have thought."

"I wish I *was* a Christian."

"You may be one, if you will; but not without earnest prayer. Will you seriously attend to your salvation, beginning *now*? With the Bible to guide you, and the Holy Spirit to pray for, will you *at once* begin to seek the Lord?"

A long pause followed this question. She seemed to be lost in thought, and I did not choose to disturb her thoughts. She appeared downcast; but after a little while, I thought I perceived a sort of obstinacy manifest in her countenance, and fearing that she was about to utter some objection, I suddenly rose to take my leave.

"What!" said she, "are you going?"

"I *must* go, Madam."

"Shall I ever see you again?" said she, beseechingly.

"Do you *wish* to see me again?"

"Yes, Sir, I *do*," said she, emphatically.

"Then I will come to see you as soon as I can. But before I come, I hope you will have made up your mind fully, and will have turned to Christ."

A month afterwards I called upon her. She appeared much as before. At times she had prayed, but not daily. I talked to her plainly and affectionately, prayed with her and left her.

I had now little hope of doing her any good. However, about three months afterwards, being in that neighbourhood, I called upon her. I could find little alteration in her feelings or habits, except that she seemed to have a more tender spirit, and was more accustomed to prayer. But nothing I could say appeared to make much impression upon her. She assented to all the truths of religion. She had known them from her childhood, when her religious parents taught her. A pensiveness and solemnity hung around her; but she had no deep anxiety. In various ways I strove to affect her: but it was all in vain, till I appealed to her conscience and sensibilities as a mother. I said to her,—

"You have three precious children intrusted to you, and your example will have great influence over them. They will be very much what you make them. If you are irreligious, they will be very likely to remain so too. If they see you living a life of faith and prayer, the example will not be lost upon them. You ought to be able to teach them religion. But how can you teach them what you do not know yourself? Allow me to say,—and I am glad I can say it,—I have been delighted to notice your conduct towards your children. In my opinion, *few mothers do so well*. I think you are training them wisely in all things *but one*. May I say it to you, I know of no children of their age who please me so much. In their excellence I see your own; and this compels me to respect and love you the more, and be the more anxious that you should train them for heaven. I am very sorry that you are *an irreligious mother!*"

She burst into tears ; and rising suddenly from her seat, turned her face towards the window and wept convulsively. I left her without uttering a word.

It was more than six months before I could see her again. As I called upon her after this long interval, she told me, that she had tried to repent and flee to Christ, had prayed daily, but her heart remained the same, and she was amazed at her stupidity. "I am insensible as a stone," said she "It seems to me I feel nothing. I wish to love God, and be a Christian ; but I am fully convinced that I have no power at all over my hard heart. And yet I have some faint hope, that God will have mercy upon me, after all my stubbornness and stupidity, and will yet grant me the Holy Spirit. Is it wrong for me to have such a hope ?"

"Not at all, my dear Madam. I am glad you have that hope. Hold on upon it. Only let all your hope be in God through Jesus Christ. Let nothing discourage you for an instant, while you attempt to obey the Gospel. I believe God has good things in store for you. You may say, 'Will he plead against me with his great power ? no, he will put strength in me.'"

"Oh that I knew where to find Him," said she.

"He is on His throne of grace," said I. "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and ye shall seek me, and ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord."

"I *do* seek, Sir ; but why does not God give me the Holy Spirit ?"

"He *does* give it, Madam. He calls you. He strives with you. He shows you your sin, your stupidity, your strange heart."

"But, Sir, do you think the Holy Spirit is sent to one alone ? and when there is no revival ?"

"Strange question for you to ask ! *Yes*, my dear friend, most unquestionably. Is the offer made only to a multitude ? Is it not made to *every one* that asks Him ?"

"I know it is. But it seems to me that it would be too

much to expect God would regard me *alone*, and when there are no others inclined to turn unto Him."

"Then your unbelieving heart does an injustice to His kindness. He is a thousand fold better than you think Him. He 'waits to be gracious unto you.' He 'calls and you refuse.' Because you do not know of others disposed to seek God, you have little courage to seek Him, though you know that His promises are made, and invitations given, to each individual sinner like yourself; *to you*, as much as if you were the only sinner in the universe."

"But, if others were attending to religion, if my husband and neighbours were, I should have more expectation of succeeding."

"Madam, I am not sure of that. I will not too much blame you for thinking so; but see here; you do *not know* how many others feel just as you do, and wait for *you* just as you wait for *them*. You mentioned your husband. I am going to see him; and I have not an item of doubt, but before I have left him he will confess to me that he is waiting for *you*."

"Why, I never thought of that," said she with surprise.

"I suppose not. But it is time for you to think of it. You and he are waiting for one another. Which shall begin first? I would not afflict you, or say an unkind word to you; I have not a feeling in my heart that would allow me to do it; but I tell you seriously, you are a *hindrance to your husband*. He may be a hindrance to you. I suppose he is. But you are a hindrance to him."

"I do not *intend* to be a hindrance to him."

"But you *are*, and you will continue to be, more or less, as long as he thinks you to be an unconverted sinner, living in your indifference and stupidity."

"What shall I do?"

"I will tell you what to do. First give your own self to the Lord. Did you ever talk with your husband on the subject of religion?"

"Oh yes, a great many times."

"Have you lately? and have you told him how you feel about your own heart, your sin and your salvation?"

"Oh no, Sir, I have not said anything to him about *that*."

"So I suppose. And now I will tell you what to do. When he comes in, and you and he are alone together, just tell him plainly and affectionately, how you feel, what you have done, and what you intend to do. Open your whole heart to him. When he hears you talking so, *he* at least will know of one sinner who intends to seek the Lord. And thus, you will hinder him no longer."

This was quite an unexpected turn of thought to her. She sat in silence for a little time, as if meditating the matter, and then inquired,—

"Did you say you would see my husband *to-day*?"

"Yes. And he will tell me you are a hindrance to him, just as you say he is a hindrance to you."

"But, Sir, I did *not* say exactly *that*."

"True, madam, you did not. I have expressed the idea a little more plainly than you did, and much less politely. You said it in your kind way, and I in my coarse one. I have not essentially altered it. You *did* mention what an *encouragement* it would be to you, if your husband were attending to his salvation. He feels precisely so about his wife, in my opinion. And what I want of you both is, that you should encourage and aid one another."

"I should be *very* glad, if he was truly a Christian."

"He would be very glad, if you were truly a Christian. But will you do what I have just told you? Will you tell him your feelings?"

After a short pause, with her eyes fixed on the ground, and a look of ineffable solemnity and tenderness, she replied emphatically,—

"Yes, my dear pastor, *I will*."

"Good-bye," said I, and reaching her my hand, instantly left her.

I soon found her husband in the field, at work among his corn; and shaping the conversation according to my previous intent, it was not long before he said to me,—

"Well, if my wife thinks it is time for her to attend to religion, I shall certainly think it is time for *me*, when my poor health reminds me so often of my end."

"I have been talking with her, and I assure you that, in my opinion, she would certainly be quite ready, were it not for one thing."

"What is that!" said he, with surprise and concern.

"That one thing is yourself. It is you who are a hindrance to her. You do not follow Christ, and she has not the encouragement of your example."

"That need not stand in *her* way."

"But it does stand in her way. She follows your example. She naturally looks to you as a guide, and her affectionate disposition catches your feelings. As long as you remain an irreligious man, your influence tends to make her remain an irreligious woman. You may be assured of this. You yourself just told me, that if she thought it was time for her to give her heart to religion, you should certainly think it was time for you; and is it not natural that she should think so too? You are the husband. She looks to you as a guide. She looks to you *more* than you look to her. She feels your influence more than you feel her's. Thus you are a hindrance to her, when you ought to be a help."

"She never said anything to me about it."

"And did you ever say any thing to *her* about it?"

"No, nothing in particular. But I have been thinking about religion a good deal, as I told you when you came here in the winter; and I do not feel contented. I am not prepared to die, and the thoughts of it make my mind gloomy."

"You *may* have such thoughts as to make your mind glad. The gospel is 'good tidings of great joy,' and 'for all people,'—*for you*. And when you go home, I want you to talk with your wife on this subject, as you know you ought to do; and tell her what you think. Will you do so?"

"I will think about it."

"But will you *do* it?"

"I can't say, I can't say."

"Well, aim to do your duty in the fear of God; aim to lead your wife and children to the kingdom of heaven." I left him.

This man was of a very sedate and cautious disposition. He was amiable, but he was firm. He was no creature of impulses. His wife had more vivacity, more sprightliness, more ardour, while she was by no means deficient in decision of character. I hoped that the vivacity of the one would stimulate the slowness of the other, and that the thinking habits of the man would steady and temper the ardour of the more impulsive woman.

Without much hope of being able to influence them at all, I called upon them again the next week—sooner probably than I should have done, but for a sort of curious desire to know the result of their next meeting after I left them. The wife met me at the door with evident gladness. "I am very happy to see you," said she, "I have something to tell you. My husband is serious, and I *do hope* he will become a Christian."

"And I suppose he hopes you will become a Christian."

"I wish I *was* one, but I am as stupid as ever. My husband is much more like a Christian than I am."

"Then his seriousness has not done you the good you expected from it."

"No, I am astonished at myself. But I must tell you. After you went away last week, I did not know what to do. I felt very strange about speaking to him as I promised you I would. I did not know how to *begin*. I thought of it a long time. At last I came to the conclusion to begin as soon as he came in, and tell it all over, just as it was. So when I heard him coming through the gate, I went out and met him there under the tree. "Said I, 'Mr Spencer has been here talking with me, and I want to tell you, my dear Luther, how I feel.' He stopped and looked at me without saying a word, and I told him all about myself, since the time when I was a little child. He listened to it all, looking at me and then on the ground; and when I

had done, I asked him if he did not think we ought to live differently. I was *so delighted* when he answered right off, 'Yes, I do.' I could hardly keep from weeping for joy, it was so different from what I expected. I said, 'My dear Luther, let us not neglect salvation any longer.' Said he, 'I don't mean to; I am determined to do all I can to lay up treasures in heaven.' After dinner we had a long talk. Almost the whole afternoon he sat here reading the Bible, and talking with me. Sometimes he did not say a word for a long time, but would read and then stop and think. As soon as he went out, I went alone and prayed, and then for the first time in my life I was glad to think I *might* pray. In the evening he sat here with me and the children, without saying much, only he asked me some questions about the Atonement and the Holy Spirit and faith in Christ. And when it was time for the children to go to bed, I whispered to him, 'Shall we not have family prayer?' He got right up, without saying a word, took down the Bible, told the boys to wait a little while, and then turned to the third chapter of John, and read it aloud. Then we all kneeled down and he made a prayer. *Such a prayer!* I could not help weeping. After we arose from our knees, and were sitting in silence a little while, our second boy went to him and put his little arms around his neck. 'Father,' says he, 'I wish you would pray so *every* night.' He looked very serious; and when the boy waited for an answer, looking right in his face, he told him, 'I am going to do it every night and every morning too.' Since that time I have been more happy than I ever was before. I know I am not a *Christian*, but I hope God will have mercy upon us, and lead us to Christ."

Such was her simple story; and she told it in a manner that would have affected any heart. Her little boys clustered around her, wept at seeing her weep, and I should have despised myself, if I could have avoided weeping with them. Her husband soon came in from the field, and after some little conversation, I prayed with them, and left them.

Months passed away before I saw them again. They then appeared much alike. They had no hope, but they did not seem unhappy. They only hoped that God would yet bring them to repentance. If now they had no faith, it did not seem to me that they had any slavish fear; and I could not say a word to discourage or alarm them, for I certainly did hope for them, since God is '*a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*' After this I left them to themselves.

Just before a communion season, which came about six months after my last interview with them, I was very agreeably surprised by an unexpected visit of this man and his wife, who called upon me at the time publicly appointed for conversation with those who desired to unite with the Church. They had come on that account. They believed that God had led them to faith in His Son, and they wished to commemorate the Saviour's death at his table. I had much conversation with them. They could not tell when their faith or hope *commenced*; and that was their greatest trouble, and the only ground of their hesitation about making a public profession of religion. They had been very much alike in their feelings. For months they had been happy, not by the belief that they were Christians, but in the exercises of the means of grace, and in the hope that God would lead them in his own way and time to religion. In this confidence they had rested, and loved to rest. The Bible, and prayer, and religious conversation were their delight. And it was not till they had passed month after month in this happy manner, that the idea occurred to either of them, that they were the children of God. The wife thought of this first, and the thought made her unhappy. "I was afraid," said she, "of a false hope, and I *tried to feel* as I *used to*, when I was afraid of being lost for ever." She mentioned her fears to her husband, and was astonished to find that he had the same fear about himself; because he too had almost half hoped that he was reconciled to God; but had been banishing the hope as a snare of the great

adversary. Then they wanted to see me; and as I did not visit them, the wife proposed, that they should come to see me that very day, for she "wanted to know whether she was a Christian or not." After much conversation, her husband told her that no man could tell her that, for God only could read the heart, and it would be better to examine themselves alone for a while. And a week or two afterwards, he objected to coming to me at all on such an errand, because the Bible says, 'Examine *your own selves* whether ye be in the faith, prove *your own selves*.' Said he, "let us pray, 'Lord search me and know my heart, and lead me in the way everlasting.'"

Week after week, their peace of mind grew more uniform and sweet. They found, as they thought, that they loved God, that they trusted in Christ for pardon, that they hated sin and found their greatest felicity in the divine promises, and in the thoughts and duties of religion. Both alike, they were determined to serve their Lord and Master as long as they should live. And because they found, as they believed, the evidences of religion in themselves, they came to the conclusion that they were Christians.

But when they came to me, the husband said, "We have, after all, one great trouble. We are not fully sure that we have had the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have never been sensible of any *sudden change*, and we have had no strong feelings of distress on account of sin, or of great joy on account of having faith. If I have any religion, I want to know when it *began*?"

"Can you tell, Sir, when your corn *begins* to grow?—or when your wheat *begins* to come up? Could you tell, my dear madam, when those beautiful violets and pinks under your window *began* to come up?"

She smiled upon me, with a countenance radiant with new intelligence and joy, and burst into tears. Said her husband, after a serious, thoughtful pause, "I know my corn *has* come up, and I know my wheat *does* grow."

"Very well," said I; "I have no more to say."

The wife turned to her husband, after a few minutes, saying, "I *should* like to know *when* I began to love God: and, Luther, it seems to me that we have been Christians ever since that first night when you prayed."

They united with the church, though uncertain of the date of their conversion. He became a very staid and thoughtful Christian. She was a Christian of light and smiles. Both were contented and happy. "I am glad we live in this retired place," said she to me, a year afterwards; "we can enjoy religion here, and nobody comes to trouble us. We have some kind and pious neighbours a little way off, who are a great comfort to us; but my Bible, my boys, and my flowers, are enough to make me happy. I would not give up my little home, my cottage, and my woods, for the richest palace in the world:"—and tears of joy coursed down her cheek when she said it. Adverting to her former trouble, she said,—"I have come to the conclusion, that it is *best for me*, that I have never yet been able to fix the time of my conversion; I am afraid I should trust too much to it, if I could. Now I trust to nothing but to continued faith, and to living in happy fellowship with my God, my heavenly Father. My husband is happy too, and what can I want more, except the conversion of my children?" As she said this, she turned away, and wept.

Her husband died in peace, as I have been told; and his precious wife, now a widow, has unspeakable comfort in two pious sons,—her joy and her earthly crown. They will soon be her eternal crown in the kingdom of heaven. I cannot doubt it.

These instances of conversion are here given as examples of an extensive class. In making my first visit to the families of my congregation, I met with a number of persons, who appeared to me to have some readiness to give their attention to the gospel call. They were not anxious, not alarmed, or in the common acceptance of

the term, serious. They evidently did not consider themselves the subjects of any special Divine influence, or as having any particular inclinations towards religion. But they appeared to me to be candid and conscientious, and to have a kind of readiness to obey the gospel. There was an indescribable *something* about them, I know not what, which made me have more hope for them than for others.

To the names of about twenty such persons I attached a private mark in my congregational book, (containing the names of all my congregation,)—a mark to indicate to *me* their state of mind, and prompt me to visit them again as soon as possible, but the meaning of which no one but myself could understand. If I may say so, they seemed *ready to become Christians*,—I know not how to describe their state of mind by any more just or intelligible expression. If, in the time of a revival of religion, they had said the same things which they now said, had presented the same appearances, and manifested the same impressions, no minister or Christian, as it seemed to me, would have hesitated to ascribe their impressions to the influences of the Holy Spirit. And, therefore, why should I not *now* have that opinion respecting them? and why not *treat* them in all respects, as I would have done in the time of a revival?—and why not *expect* the same results?

These were serious and troublesome questions to my own mind. By conversation with older and more experienced pastors, I aimed to get some instruction on this subject; but all I could learn did not satisfy me, indeed it did not seem to do me the least good. I found I must teach myself what nobody appeared able to teach me. And, however just or unjust may have been the conclusion to which, by continued and intense reflection, my mind was at last brought; I retain the same opinions now, after a score of years has passed away, which I formed at first. I believe those persons had their cast of mind through the influences of the Divine Spirit. Almost

every one of those, to whose name I attached my private mark, within the space of two years became hopefully converted to Christ.

I often visited them, conversed with them, and entreated them to be reconciled to God. And the greatest obstacle (as it seemed to me), that I had to encounter, was their uniform impression, that God had not given them the Holy Spirit, and that it would therefore be in vain for them to attempt to seek the Lord. It was an exceeding difficult thing to convince any one of them, that the Holy Spirit was present, and that their serious impressions, and occasional fears, and occasional prayers, were the effects of a Divine influence, and the very substance of a Divine call. But I had myself been led to this conclusion. I thought that they themselves ought to be convinced of this, and ought not, through ignorance and error, to be left to misimprove the day of their merciful visitation, waiting for a revival of religion. In almost every instance, (indeed, I do not remember a single exception,) the commencement of an earnest and hoping attempt to gain salvation, originated in the conviction, which I strove hard to impress upon the mind, that the Holy Spirit was already striving with them, as really as if there was a revival all around.

To the name of the woman whom I have mentioned in this sketch, I attached my mystic mark the first time I ever saw her; and to the name of her husband, the first time I ever saw him. And on this account, I was led to see them the more frequently. I am very certain, that I was not at all the instrument of their *conviction*, (or that of the conviction of twenty more like them;) whatever assistance in other respects, the truths which I uttered may have been to them, in leading them to Christ. Probably many, very many sinners, who *never think of it*, are visited by the Holy Spirit. Probably, not a month passes, when there are not strivings of the Spirit with unconverted sinners in all our congregations. And if such sinners, instead of allowing every trifle of the world to

dispel their serious thoughts, would only cherish them, conspiring with the Holy Spirit; there is every reason to believe that they would become the happy children of God. Oh, if they but knew how near God is unto them, and how infinitely willing He is, in His kindness and love, to lead them into the ways of salvation; they would not suffer these seasons of promise to pass by unimproved: especially the young, whose kindness of heart has not yet been all poisoned, or all blasted by the world, would not so often turn a deaf ear to the *still small voice of the Spirit*.

“ Their happy song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord has done for me.”

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My Old Mother,

OR CONSCIENCE IN TRADE.

A YOUNG man, who at that time was almost an entire stranger to me, called upon me at a late hour in the evening, and, after some general conversation, said that he wished to talk with me in reference to a matter which had troubled him for some time. He came *to me*, as he said, because a few days before he had heard a member of a neighbouring church railing against me, and among other things, saying that I was stern and severe enough for a slave driver. "So," said he, "I thought you would tell me the truth right out."

He was a junior clerk in a dry goods store—a salesman. He had been in that situation for some months. He went into it a raw hand. His employer had taken some pains to instruct him in its duties, and had otherwise treated him in a very kind manner. But he was expected, and indeed required to do some things which he "did not know to be quite right." He stated these things to me with minuteness and entire simplicity. He had been taught by his employer to do them, as a part of the "necessary skill to be exercised in selling goods," without which "no man could be a good salesman, or be fit for a merchant."

For example, he must learn to judge by the appearance of any woman who entered the store, by her dress, her manner, her look, the tone of her voice, whether she had much knowledge of the commodity she wished to purchase; and if she had not, he must put the price higher, as high as he thought she could be induced to pay. If there was any objection to the price of an article he must

say, "we have never sold it any cheaper," or, "we paid that for it, madam, at wholesale," or, "you cannot buy that quality of goods any lower in the city." With one class of customers he must *always* begin by asking a half or a third more than the regular price, because, probably, through the ignorance of the customer, he could get it; and if he could not, then he must put it at a lower price, but still above its value, at the same time saying, "that it is just what we gave for it," or, "that is the very lowest at which we can put it to you," or, "we would not offer it to anybody else so low as that, but we wish to get your custom." In short, a very large portion of the service expected of him was just this sort, and as I soon told him, it was just to *lie*, for the purpose of cheating.

Whenever he hesitated to practise in this manner behind the counter, his employer (ordinarily present) was sure to notice it, and sure to be dissatisfied with him.

He had repeatedly mentioned to his employer his "doubts" whether "this was just right," and "got laughed at." He was told, "everybody does it," "you can't be a merchant without it," "all is fair in trade," "you are too green."

"I know I am green," said the young man to me, in a melancholy tone. "I was brought up in an obscure place in the country, and don't know much about the ways of the world. My mother is a poor woman, a widow woman, who was not able to give me much education; but I don't believe *she* would think it right for me to do such things."

"And do *you* think it right?" said I.

"No,—I don't know,—perhaps it may be. Mr H." (his employer) "says there is no *sin* in it, and he is a member of the church; but I believe it would make my old mother feel very bad, if she knew I was doing such things every day."

"I venture to say, that your mother has got not only more religion, but more common sense than a thousand *like him*. He may be a member of the church, the

church always has some unworthy members in it, I suppose; but he is not a man fit to direct you. Take your mother's way and refuse his."

"I shall lose my place," says he.

"Then lose your place; don't hesitate a moment."

"I engaged for a year, and my year is not out."

"No matter; you are ready to fulfil your engagement. But what *was* your engagement? Did you engage to deceive, to cheat and lie?"

"Oh, not at all."

"Then certainly you need have no hesitation, through fear of forfeiting your place. If he sends you away, because you will not do such things for him, then you will know him to be a very bad man, from whom you may well be glad to be separated."

"He says he will have his business done in the manner *he* chooses."

"Very well: you have no objections to *that*; let him do his business in the way he chooses: but he has no right to make you use *your tongue*, in the way he chooses; and if he complains of you because you do not choose to lie for him every hour in the day; just tell him, that you have not hired out your conscience to him, and you will not be guilty of committing any crimes for him. Ask him, if he expects you to *steal* for him, if he should happen to want you to do it."

"When I told him I thought such things wrong, he said, 'that is *my* look out.'"

"Tell him it is *your* look out, whether you please God, or offend him—whether you do right or wrong—whether you serve the God of truth, or the father of lies."

"If I should say that, he would tell me to be off."

"Very well; *be* off then."

"I have no place to go to; and he knows it."

"No matter; go anywhere—do anything—dig potatoes—black boots—sweep the streets for a living, sooner than yield for one hour to such temptation."

"He says, 'everybody does so,' and 'no man can ever get along in the way of trade without it.'"

"About everybody's doing so, I know better. That is *not true*. Some men are honest and truthful in trade. A man may be honest behind the counter, as easily as in the pulpit. But if a man can't be a merchant without these things, then he can't be a merchant and get to heaven; and the sooner you quit that business the better."

"And in respect to his declaration, that 'no man can get along in the way of trade without such practices,' it is false—utterly false! And I wish you to take notice of men now when you are young, as extensively as you can, and see how they come out. You will not have to notice long, before you will be convinced of the truth of that homely old maxim, 'honesty is the best policy.' You will soon see, that such men as he, are the very men *not* to 'get along.' *He* will not 'get along' well a great while, if he does not alter his course."

"Oh, he is a keen fellow," said the young man smiling.

"So is old Satan a keen fellow; but he is the greatest fool in the universe. His keenness has just ruined him. And your employer's keenness will turn out no better. He may, indeed, probably prosper *here*. Such men sometimes do. But the Bible has described him—"they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." He 'will be rich;' that is what he wants; his 'will' is all that way. And he has fallen into the 'temptation' to lie, in order to get rich. And this is a 'snare' to him—it is a trap, and he is caught in it; and if he does not repent and get out of it, he will be 'drowned in destruction and perdition.'

"But I was going to speak of his worldly prosperity. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet. I do not believe, that God will work any miracles in his case. But *I do believe that man will fail!* Mark him well; and remember what I say, if you live to notice him ten or twenty years hence. In my opinion, you will see him a poor man; and probably, a despised man."

"What makes you *think so?*" said he, with great astonishment.

"Because he is not honest,—does not regard the truth. His lying will soon defeat its own purposes. His customers, one after another, and especially the best of them, will find him out, and they will forsake him, because they cannot trust his word. He will lose more than he will gain by all the falsehoods he utters. I know a dozen men in this city, some of them merchants, some butchers, some grocers, some tailors, whom I always avoid, and always will. If I *know* a man has lied to me once, in the way of his business, that ends all my dealings with him; I never go near him afterwards. Such is my practice; and I tell my wife so, and my children so. And sometimes, yea often, I tell them the *names of the men*. If any of my friends ask me about these men, I tell them the truth, and put them upon their guard. And thus their custom is diminished, because their character becomes known. This is one reason why I think Mr H— will not prosper.

"But whatever the mode may be, his reverses will come: mark my words, they will come. God will make them come."

With great depression, he replied,—“I don't know what I *could do*, if I should lose my place: I don't get but a little more than enough to pay my board,—my mother gives me my clothes, and if I lose my situation, I could not pay my board for a month.”

“Then,” said I, “if you get so little, you will not lose much by quitting. I do not pretend to know much about it, but in my opinion, Mr H— *wrong*s you, does you a positive *injustice* and a *cruel* one, by giving you so little. And if you quit, and cannot pay your board till you get something to do, tell *me*,—I will see to that.” (He never had occasion to tell me.)

“If I quit that place so soon,” said the young man, “it will make my old mother feel very bad; she will think I am getting unsteady, or something else is the matter with me. She will be afraid that I am going to ruin.”

"*Not a bit of it,*" said I. "*Tell* her just the truth, and you will fill her old heart with *joy*: she will thank God that she has got such a son,—and she will send up into heaven another prayer for you, which I would rather have than all the gold of Ophir."

The young man's eyes filled with tears, and I let him sit in silence for some time. At length he said to me,—

"I don't think I can stay there; but I don't know what to do, or where to look."

"Look to *God* first, and *trust* Him. Do you think He will let you *suffer*, because, out of regard to His commandments, you have lost your place? Never. Such is not His way. Ask *Him* to guide you."

"I am pretty much a stranger here," said he, with a very dejected look; "I know but few people, and I don't know where I could get any thing to do."

"For that very reason ask God to guide you. Are you accustomed to pray?"

"Yes, I have been at times, lately. Some months ago, I began to try to seek the Lord, after I heard a sermon on that subject; and ever since that time, off and on, I have been trying. But I didn't know what to do in my situation."

"Will you answer me one question, as truly and fully as you are able?"

"Yes, Sir, if I think it is *right* for me to answer it."

"The question is, has not your seriousness, and has not your trying to seek God, sometimes been diminished, *just when* you have had the most temptation in the store, leading you to do what you thought *wrong*,—even if you did it for another?"

He sat in silence, apparently pondering the question for a few moments, and then replied,—

"Yes,—I believe it has."

"*'Quench not the Spirit,'* then," said I. I then entered into particular conversation with him about his religious feelings, and found that his convictions of sin, and his desires for salvation, had rendered him for some

weeks particularly reluctant to continue in an employment, where he felt obliged to practise so much deception. And I thought I could discover no little evidence in the history he gave me of his religious impressions, that the way of his daily business had been hostile to his attempts to come to repentance. And after I had plainly pointed out to him the demands of the gospel, and explained, as well as I could, the free offers of its grace and salvation, to all which he listened with intense attention and solemnity, he asked,—

“What would you advise me to do about my *business*?”

“Just this: go back to your store, and do all your duties most faithfully and punctually, without lying. If your employer finds fault with you, explain to him mildly and respectfully, that you are willing to do all that is right according to the law of God: but that you cannot consent to lie for anybody. If he is not a fool, he will like you the better for it, and prize you the more; for he will at once see, that he has got one clerk, on whose veracity he can depend. But if the man is as silly as he is unconscientious; he will probably dismiss you before long. After that, you can look about you, and see what you can do. And, rely upon it, God will open a way for you somewhere. But first and most of all, repent and believe in Jesus Christ.”

The young man left me, promising soon to see me again. He did see me. He was led to seek the Lord. He became a decided Christian. He united with the church. But he did not remain long in that store. His mode did not please his employer.

However, he soon found another place. He established a character for integrity and promptness, and entered afterwards into business for himself. He prospered. He prospers still. It is now thirteen years since he came to me at that late hour in the evening; and he is now a man of extensive property, of high respectability,—has a family,—and is contented and happy. I often hear of him, as an active and useful member of a church not far distant.

I sometimes meet with him. He is still accustomed to open all his heart to me, when we are together; and it is very pleasant for me to notice his engagedness in religion, his respectability and happiness.

His employer became bankrupt about seven years after he left him, and almost as much bankrupt in character, as in fortune. He still lives, I believe; but in poverty, scarcely sustaining himself by his daily toil.

I attribute this young man's integrity, conversion, and salvation, to his "old mother," as he always fondly called her. But for the lessons which she instilled into his mind, and the hold which she got upon his conscience, before he was fifteen; I do not believe I should ever have seen him. In my first interview with him, it was evident that the thought of his mother touched him more tenderly than anything else; and to this day, I scarcely ever meet him, and speak with him of personal religion, but some mention is made of his "old mother."

The instance of this young man has led me to think much of the dangers to which persons so situated are exposed; and I think I find in his history the clue to an explanation of a melancholy fact, that has often come under my notice. The fact to which I now refer is simply this,—that many young men are, at times, evidently the subjects of the alarming influences of the Holy Spirit, who, nevertheless, never become true Christians. And this young man's history goes far to convince me, that the Holy Spirit is quenched and led to depart from them, by some unconscientious proceedings in their business. If this young man had yielded to his employer, who can believe that he ever would have yielded to the Holy Spirit?

It was not strange that this young man should have felt a great anxiety about his earthly prospects and prosperity. He was poor. His "old mother" was poor.

He had no friend to lean upon. In such a situation, I could excuse his anxiety; but, in such a situation, it was most sad, to have the influences which were around him every hour of the day, turning his anxiety into temptation to sin. Before I knew him, he had almost come to believe, that falsehood was a necessary thing in the transaction of business. He had noticed the eagerness of his employer to be rich. He had been sneered at and ridiculed as "too green," simply because he chose to act conscientiously; and this was a trial and a temptation very dangerous for a young man to encounter. It was a difficult thing for me, with all I could say, to pluck him out of this snare of the Devil. And I deem it quite probable, that large numbers of our young men are kept from seeking God, by an undue anxiety about worldly things,—an anxiety, fostered and goaded on to madness, by the spirit, example and influence of their employers. By this unwise and uncalled-for anxiety to be rich, the heart is harassed, the conscience is beclouded by some smooth sophistry, the Holy Spirit is resisted, and heaven forgotten; and all this, at that very age, when the heart ought to be happy, and when, as the character is forming, it is most important that God's word and God's Spirit should not be unheeded. By this anxiety to be rich the bright morning of youth is overhung with dark clouds of care, and the immortal soul is grappled to the world as with chains of iron! No young man should feel himself qualified or safe, in entering upon the business of the world, till his hope is fixed on Christ, and his unalterable determination is, to obey God, and gain heaven, whatever else he loses. And it would be well for every such young man, when surrounded by the influences of an eager and craving covetousness, and its thousand temptations, to hold the world in check, and be led to prayer, by the remembrance of his "Old Mother."

Nobody said anything to me.

THE title which I have given to this sketch, is taken from the lips of a young man, who afterwards became a member of my church. He had called upon me for conversation upon the subject of his religious duty; and after conversing with him, and saying such things to him as I thought appropriate to his state of mind, I asked him how it came about that he had not given his prayerful attention to the subject of religion before.

"Nobody said anything to me," says he.

"Yes," I replied, "*I* have said a great many things to you."

"I know you have in *sermons*; but I mean, nobody said anything to me in *particular*, before yesterday."

"Who said anything to you yesterday?"

"Henry Clapp," said he, (naming a young man who had recently entertained a hope in God.)

"What did Henry say to you?"

"As I met him in the street," says he, "he stopped me, and told me he had something to say to me, and asked me if he might say it. I said yes, he might. And then he said, 'It is high time for you to begin to seek the Lord.'"

"And what did you answer?"

"I hardly had time to answer at all, for he passed right on. But I said to him, when he had got a few feet from me, 'So it is, Henry.' He turned back his face partly toward me, looking over his shoulder, and answered, '*Do it then,*' and went right on."

"Have you seen him since?"

"No, Sir."

"You say, nobody said anything to you before. If he,

or some one else, had spoken to you before, do you think you would have begun before?"

"I believe I should."

Such was the opinion of this young man. To this opinion he adhered long after. The last time I spoke to him on that subject, he said to me that he believed he "should have sought the Lord *years before*, if anybody had spoken to him about it."

Here, then, was a young man, living in the midst of a Christian community till he was more than twenty years old, a regular attendant at church, known to scores of Christian men and women; and yet, "nobody said anything to him!" The first sentence that was uttered to him was not lost upon him.

There are few points of duty more difficult for wise and engaged Christians to decide, than it is to decide what they shall say, or whether they shall say anything, to the irreligious persons whom they are accustomed to meet. Many times they are afraid to say anything to them on the subject of religion, lest they should do them an injury by awakening opposition or disgust.

No man can teach them their duty. What may be the duty of one, may not be the duty of another. The question depends upon so many things, upon character, upon intimacy, upon time, place, occasion, age, and a thousand other circumstances, that no wise man will ever attempt to lay down any general rule upon the subject. But if a Christian's heart longs for the conversion of sinners as it ought, he will not be likely to err. If he speaks to an unconverted sinner, in love and alone, and without disputation, and in humility, and in the spirit of prayer, his words will do no harm. He may not be able to do good, but at least he can *try*. The unconverted in the midst of God's people, meeting them every day, their friends, their associates, and neighbours, certainly ought not to be able to declare, "*nobody* said anything to me,"—"no man cared for my soul."

Family Prayer.

A MAN of my congregation, about forty years of age, after quite a protracted season of anxiety, became, as he hoped, a child of God. There was nothing in his convictions, or in his hopeful conversion, so far as I could discern, of any very peculiar character, unless it was the distinctness of his religious views and feelings.

But this man did not propose to unite with the church, as I had supposed he would deem it his duty to do. One season of communion after another passed by, and he still remained away from the table of the Lord. I was surprised at this, and the more so on account of the steady interest in religion, and the fixed faith in Christ which he appeared to possess. I conversed plainly with him, upon the duty of a public profession of his faith. He felt it to be his duty, but he shrunk from it. He had a clear hope, was constant at church, was prayerful, but he hesitated to confess Christ before men. All the ground of hesitation which I could discover as I conversed with him, was a fear that he might dishonour religion, if he professed it, and a desire to have a more assured hope. What I said to him on these points appeared to satisfy him, and yet he stayed away from the Lord's table, though he said, "I should feel it a great privilege to be there."

In aiming to discover, if possible, why a man of such clear religious views, of such apparent faith, and so much fixed hope in religion, should hesitate on a point of duty which he himself deemed obligatory upon him; I learned, to my surprise, that he had never commenced the duty of family prayer. He felt an inexpressible reluctance to it—a reluctance for which he could not account. He won-

dered at himself, but still he felt it. He blamed himself, but still he felt it. This cleared up the mystery. I no longer wondered at all at his hesitation on the matter of an open profession of religion. I had not a doubt, but his fears of dishonouring religion, and his waiting for greater assurance of hope, all arose from the neglect of family prayer. I told him so, and urged that duty upon him, as one that should precede the other. His wife urged it; but yet he omitted it. Finally, I went to his house, and commenced that service with him. He continued it from that time, and from that time his difficulties all vanished. Before he united with the church, he said to me, "it was a great trial to me to commence praying with my family, but now it is my delight. I would not omit it on any account. Since I have commenced it I find it a joyful duty. It comforts and strengthens me." He had now no hesitation in coming out before the world, and openly professing his faith in Christ.

Neglect of one duty often renders us unfit for another. God "is a rewarder," and one great principle on which he dispenses his rewards is this—through our faithfulness in *one* thing he bestows grace upon us to be faithful in another. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

Doctrines Reconciled,

OR FREEDOM AND SOVEREIGNTY.

I CASUALLY met a member of my church in the street, and the nature of some conversation which was introduced, led him to ask me, if I recollected the conversation I had with him, at the time when he first called upon me for conversation upon the subject of religion. I had forgotten it entirely. He then referred to the period of his trouble, before he entertained any hope in Christ, and mentioned the particular subject about which he came to consult me. But I had no recollection of what I had said to him. He then stated the conversation in his own way, and I afterwards solicited of him the favor to write it down for me, which he kindly did, (omitting the name of the minister he mentioned,) and I here transcribe it from his letter, which lies before me.

“At a time when my thoughts were led, as I trust, by the Holy Spirit, to dwell more than had been usual with me, on God and eternity in their relations to myself, and I was endeavouring to get light from a more particular examination of the doctrines of the Bible than I had ever before made; great difficulties were presented to my mind by the apparent inconsistency of one doctrine with another. I could believe them, each by itself; but could *not* believe them all together; and so great did this difficulty become, that it seemed to me like an insuperable obstacle in a narrow path, blocking up my way, and excluding all hope of progress. But I was still led to look at this obstacle with a sincere desire, I believe, for its removal.

“While in this state of mind, a friend solicited me to converse with a minister of much experience and high

reputation for learning. I visited him in his study, and was cordially invited to make known my feelings, with the promise of such assistance as he could render. I then asked, if he could explain to me *how* God could be the ever-present and ever-active sovereign of all things, controlling and directing matter and spirit, and man be left free in his ways and choice, and responsible for all his actions. He replied, that he thought he could explain and remove this difficulty; and commenced a course of argument and illustration, the peculiar mode and nature of which I have now forgotten, but in which my untrained mind soon became utterly lost and confused, as in a labyrinth. And when, after his remarks had been extended many minutes, he paused, and asked if I now apprehended the matter; I felt obliged to confess to him that I did not understand anything about it. He then (without any discourtesy, however,) intimated that my mind was not capable of mastering a logical deduction of that nature; and I retired somewhat mortified, and in much doubt whether the fault was in myself, the subject, or the reasoning I had heard.

"A short time after this, I called upon another well-known minister, who had invited any to visit him who were desirous of conversing on religious subjects. After a little general conversation, I repeated to him the same question that I had before addressed to the other minister, adding that I had been told that it could be clearly explained, and asking him if he could thus explain it to me. After a moment's pause he made this reply,—'*No*,—nor any other man that ever lived. If any man says he can *explain that*, he says what is not true.' This short and somewhat abrupt answer, spoken with great emphasis, produced a remarkable effect upon my mind. A sense of the incomprehensibility of God seemed to burst upon me with great power. His doctrines now appeared to me as parts of His ways, and His ways as past finding out. I felt as if I had suddenly, and almost violently been placed on the other side of the obstruction, which, with others of

its kind, had blocked up my path. And although they were still there, and still objects of wonder and admiration, they were *no longer in the way*.

"After a few moments, my instructor added, that he thought he could convince me of the *truth* of the two doctrines I had named in connection; and by a short and simple course of argument, beginning with God as the Author of all things, he made more clear and distinct to my apprehension the entire sovereignty of God over all His works; and also on the other point, beginning with every man's consciousness of freedom of will, he showed me the indisputable evidence on which that truth rests. And then alluding to the axiom, that all truth is consistent with itself, and separate truths with each other, he left the subject to my reflections.

"I may be permitted to add, that I do not pretend to judge of the wisdom of the *modes* adopted by these two ministers, as applied to other minds than my own,—but in my own case I very well know, that the most laboured reasonings and explanations could not have been half as effectual in resolving my difficulty, as that plain, direct answer before quoted.

"Although years have elapsed since these conversations occurred, the one last mentioned is still vivid in my memory, and its permanent usefulness to me is frequently realized, when vain speculations on subjects not to be understood intrude themselves upon my mind."

Things hidden belong to God: things revealed belong to us. Little is gained by attempting to invade the province of God's mysteries. Every man will *attempt* it. Such is human nature. Mind will not willingly stop at the boundaries which God has for the present prescribed for it. But in vain will it strive to overpass them. 'We know in part. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.'

There is one great reason *why* we cannot know everything—simply because we are not God. The only real religious utility, which grows out of the attempt to understand things not revealed to us, is to be found in the fact that such an attempt may humble us: it may show us what inferior beings we are, how ignorant, how hemmed in on every side; and thus compel us to give God His own high place, infinitely above us, and hence infinitely beyond us.

If I am not mistaken, those men, those ministers, who so strenuously aim to vindicate God's ways to man, to make clear what God has not revealed, do, in fact, degrade our ideas of God more than they illuminate our understandings. They make God appear not so far off, not so much above us. If they suppose that they have shed any light upon those unrevealed things which belong to God, it is quite probable that they suppose so, very much because they have levelled down his character and ways towards the grade of their own. Thus they may lead us to pride, but not to humility; they have not brought us nearer to God, but have done something to make us feel that God is very like one of ourselves; they have not given us more knowledge, but convinced us (erroneously,) that we are not quite so ignorant and limited after all. This is an unhappy result. It would be better to have the opposite one, to make us feel that God is God, and therefore inscrutable. 'He holdeth back the face of his throne and spreadeth his cloud upon it.' Better far to show a sinner 'the cloud,' and hold his eye upon it, and make him stand in awe, and feels his own ignorance and insignificance, than to make him think (erroneously,) that there is no 'cloud' there.

Somewhere the human mind *must* stop. We cannot know everything. Much is gained when we become fully convinced of this; and something more is gained when we are led to see clearly the line which divides the regions of our knowledge from the regions of our ignorance. That dividing line lies very much between *facts* and

modes. The facts are on the one side of it, the modes are on the other. The facts are on *our* side, and are matters of knowledge to us (because suitably proved); the modes are on *God's* side, and are matters of ignorance to us (because not revealed). "*How*" God could be an efficient and sovereign Ruler over all things and yet man be free to will and to do, was the question which troubled this young man, when he first began to seek God. It was not a question of *fact*, but of *mode*, ("how?"), and therefore, not a thing of duty; and therefore, a thing of difficulty to him, if he chose to meddle with it.

Now what should I say to him? It seemed to me, to be at once honest and wise to tell him *the plain truth*,—"No,—nor any other man; no man ever did explain it, or ever will. If any man *says* he can explain it, he says what is *not true*." That was the fit answer, because the true one. The young man in his account of that answer, very politely calls it "somewhat abrupt;" but he might very justly have called it by a less gentle name, *blunt*. In my opinion, that was the very excellence of it—that is the reason why the answer answered its purpose. It was the truth condensed and unmistakable. At a single dash it swept away his army of difficulties. It shewed him that he had been labouring at an impossibility—at a thing beyond man—a thing with which he had nothing to do, but believe it and let it alone, and let God take care of it. He says, "a sense of the incomprehensibility of God seemed to burst upon me with great power. His doctrines now appeared to me as parts of His ways, and His ways as past finding out." Again he says, "the most laboured reasonings and explanations could not have been half as effectual in resolving my difficulty, as that plain, direct answer." Its excellence consisted in this—it *was* plain, just the whole, blunt truth. *He* says it was "permanently useful," to keep him from "vain speculations." Its utility was just this; it led him to give God the place which belongs to Him, and take his own.

His trouble undoubtedly was, that he could not see

"how," the doctrines he mentioned were reconcilable. But they did not *need* any reconciling. They do not quarrel. *God is an efficient sovereign over all.* That is one of the doctrines; and it was easily demonstrated to his entire satisfaction. Anybody can demonstrate it. *Man is free and accountable.* That is the other doctrine; and it was easily demonstrated. Anybody can demonstrate it. Both the doctrines are *true*, therefore and hence they need no reconciling. There is no inconsistency betwixt them. That is enough.

If any one choose to attempt to go beyond this, and by any metaphysical explanation of God's sovereign efficiency on the one hand, and man's freedom on the other, explain "*how*" the two things *can* be true, he will flounder in the mud—he will 'darken counsel by words without knowledge.'"

An unconverted sinner is not reconciled to God, and this is the very reason why he is not reconciled to the doctrines of God. In my opinion these doctrines ought *always* to be presented in such a manner as to indicate their high origin, as to show they are *like* God. *Then*, an unconverted sinner will be apt to see that he dislikes the doctrines, just because he dislikes God; and thus his convictions of an evil heart will become more fixed and clear; or, at least, he will perceive that the doctrines are just such as he ought to *expect*, because they precisely accord with their infinite Author. Let him be reconciled to God, and he will find little trouble with the doctrines. But, let him be reconciled to God *as He is*, an incomprehensible sovereign, an infinite mystery to a finite mind, "the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity." If he is reconciled to false notions of God, all his religion will be likely to be false. A comprehensible God is no God at all, for what is comprehensible is not infinite. Let men beware of "intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up with their fleshly mind."

The Bird of Paradise.

AMONG my parishioners, there was a poor woman who had once seen better days. She had moved in the most respectable society, the wife of a man of wealth, who formerly held an important official station in the state, but who was now reduced to poverty; and trembling with the weight of three score years and ten, had greatly lost the powers of his mind. She was many years younger than her husband. Neither of them was a follower of Christ. Indeed, after their early years, they had never paid anything more than a formal and fashionable attention to even the outward duties of religion. For years after their marriage, they lived in splendour; and when his extravagance had squandered his fortune, they were under the necessity of occupying the crazy old house where I first became acquainted with them. Through the benevolence of some wealthy relations, who were very kind to them, their temporal necessities were so provided for, that they did not suffer.

Earnestly I strove to interest their minds in the subject of religion. The old man appeared to me to be as stupid as any sinner can be; and he remained so, I believe, to the day of his death,—a victim, as I thought, of the foolish love of mere earthly ostentation and pleasure. Not so, his far younger wife. She listened to me with attention, and apparent interest, as I spread the subject of religion before her mind, on my first visit to her house; and when I called upon her again, a month afterwards, I found she had commenced reading her Bible with evident anxiety and prayer. The questions she asked me, and her tearful attention to my answers, clearly indicated the

interest she felt in this great subject, which, she said, was "almost new" to her thoughts; for, she had "scarcely given a thought to it in twenty years." Said she, "Pleasure occupied my mind at first, and after my husband's failure, it was all I could think of, to contrive how we should live."

She bore her reverses with commendable fortitude,—laboured hard to support herself and her husband, kept her little old cottage a pattern of neatness, and on the whole she won the respect of the few neighbours that knew her. There was nothing about her, as a woman or as an inquiring sinner, which appeared to me uncommon or peculiar. There was, indeed, as I thought some little manifestation of a nervous excitability, when she mentioned to me her wicked heart, her struggles in prayer, and her despondency about "ever gaining the forgiveness of God;" but this I never should have thought of again, had it not been for what occurred afterwards.

About a week after I had seen and conversed with her at her house, not for the first or second time, and when I began to hope that she was 'not far from the kingdom of God,' she called upon me. She came to tell me of her hope in Christ, and how happy she was now in the belief that God had forgiven and accepted her. She trusted, as she said, that God had "heard her prayers, and had sent her an answer of peace."

By way of examining her state of mind, in order to know what to say to her, I asked her a few questions, which she answered in a manner quite satisfactory to me. I found in her nothing to make me distrust her,—indeed nothing but the contrary, till I asked her,—

"How long have you had this hope and 'this delightful happiness,' which you mention?"

"Since last Thursday night," was her reply. (It was now Tuesday.)

"What *then* led you to believe that God had 'heard your prayer, and sent you an answer of peace?'"

"It was what I saw," said she, with some little hesitation, as if reluctant to answer.

"What did you see?"

"It was," said she, hesitating,—"*it was a great light,*" and she spake it solemnly, and with evident sincerity, but some excitement.

"Indeed!" said I. "And where did you see it?"

"In my room."

"What was it?—What caused it?"

"I don't know what it was, but it was *wonderful*! I shall never forget it."

"Did it frighten you?"

"Oh no, not at all."

"Was it moonshine?"

"No, not at all like it."

"Did it shine in at the window? or through a crack?"

"Neither, it was just in the room."

"What did it look like?"

"It was very wonderful, the sweetest light I ever saw. It was brighter than any sunshine; but it was so mild and soft that it did not dazzle the eyes. It was *perfectly* beautiful—most enchanting."

"Well now, Mrs L——, just tell me all about it; I want to know how it was, the time, and all about it."

Seeming to arrange her thoughts, she replied,—

"I had been sitting up a long time after Mr L—— went to bed, reading my Bible and trying to pray, and I almost despaired of mercy, because my heart was so wicked and obstinate. I felt as if I *could not* go to bed that night, without some proof that God would have mercy upon me. I was terrified with the thought of his wrath, but I felt that I deserved it all. Finally, I went to bed. I had been lying in bed about half an hour thinking of my condition, and all at once, the most beautiful light I ever saw shined all over the room. It was a strange kind of light; brighter than day, brighter than any sunshine; but a great deal more beautiful and sweet. It was mild and so soothing, it filled me with perfect peace, a kind of sweet ecstasy, like a delightful dream. Then, in an instant, as I was thinking how delightful it

was, there appeared the most beautiful creature that I ever saw. I was perfectly enchanted and carried away with the beauty of it, its colours were so sweet and mingled, and its form so graceful. It was a bird. He had a rainbow in his bill, and a crown of glittering, soft-shining gold upon his head; he was resting on a globe of the softest blue, the most enchanting colour that ever was. I never before conceived of anything so beautiful. His colour, and his figure, and the crown of shining gold upon his head, the rainbow he held in his bill, and the blue globe he stood on, and the bright sweet light which filled the room, were all of them more beautiful and lovely than anything I ever thought of before. I was amazed and perfectly happy. ‘*What is it?*’ says I, ‘*what is it?*’ ‘Why it is the bird of Paradise,’ says I. ‘My precious Father has sent it to me from heaven, I will not despair any longer.’ Then, I thought how happy I am; God has heard me and had mercy upon me. I have been perfectly happy ever since.”

She appeared to be in an ecstasy of delight.

“What makes you so happy?”

“Because I think God has forgiven me, and because *now* I love Him and trust Him.”

“How do you feel about *sin*?”

“Oh, I hate it. It displeases God, and separates me from Him.”

“What do you think of Christ?”

“He is a precious Saviour. I love him and trust in Him.”

“For *what* do you trust Him?”

“For everything—for pardon, and peace, and heaven.”

“Do you think you are holy now?”

“No; I know that I sin every hour. But God is gracious to me and fills me with joy.”

“Do you rejoice because you are so good?”

“No; I rejoice because God has been so good to me.”

“What have you done to gain his favour?”

“I have have done *nothing* only turn to Him.”

"Did you turn to him of yourself?"

"No; I *tried*, but my heart would not yield, and I prayed for the Holy Spirit."

"How do you expect to be saved?"

"By the *mercy of God*, through my Saviour."

"How do you know He is *your* Saviour?"

"Because I trust in Him, and he has promised to save all that come unto Him."

"Have you any *doubt* about your forgiveness?"

"No, Sir, not much,—none that troubles me. I know my heart is deceitful; but I trust only in Christ, and then I am safe."

"Do you think the appearance which you saw on Thursday night, was something sent by God?"

"Yes, I suppose it was."

"How do you know but the devil sent it?"

"I never thought it *could* come from anything but God."

"For what purpose do you think He sent it?"

"To give me peace."

"What *reason* have you to think it was sent to assure you of God's favour?"

"I don't know what reason I have to think so, only I was made so happy."

"Does the Bible teach you that God gives such visions as an evidence of His favour?"

"I think not."

"Do you think it was a miracle?"

"I don't know. I thought God sent it."

"What o'clock was it when you saw the light?"

"About one o'clock, I should think."

"Was the moon up?"

"No, it had gone down about an hour before."

"What makes you think it was one o'clock?"

"Because it was ten when Mr L—— went to bed. Then I sat up a long time,—I should think more than two hours, reading and praying, and thinking about my danger of being lost; and I had been in bed some time,—I cannot tell exactly how long—half an hour perhaps."

"Had you been asleep?"

"No, I *think* not."

"Were you asleep when you saw it?"

"Oh no; I was as much awake as I am now."

"Did you see the light and the bird with your natural eyes, the same as you see me now?"

"Yes."

"Where were they?"

"In my room."

"Did Mr L—— see them?"

"No, he was asleep."

"If he had been awake, do you think *his eyes* would have seen them?"

"Certainly, I suppose so."

"Why didn't you wake him?—is not he fond of birds?"

"I don't know but he is fond of birds," said she, with a very doubtful look, "but I never thought of waking him."

"Have you got a canary bird?"

"No, Sir," said she, as if doubtful of my meaning.

"Did you ever see a bird of Paradise?"

"No, Sir, not alive. I have seen stuffed ones."

"Which are the prettiest,—the stuffed ones or the one you saw that night?"

She cast her eyes down, with a look of mingled sadness and confusion, evidently thinking by this time that I meant to ridicule her vision; but she replied, mildly and solemnly,—

"Nothing on earth can be compared with what I saw that night."

"Did the bird sing any?"

"No, sir."

"That is a pity. If he had only sung, then you would have had a *song* of Paradise. What became of the bird?"

"It went away."

"Why didn't you catch it and cage it? It would have brought a good price in Boston. Did it fly out of the window?"

"I said it went away; I mean by that, that the light and all I saw vanished away, and I saw them no more."

"How long did they stay before they vanished?"

"Only a few minutes."

"What did you do when they were gone?"

"I lay for a long time thinking about it, and feeling delighted and grateful to God."

"Grateful for the canary bird and the rainbow? Do you mean *that*?"

"No, Sir, not that so much; but grateful for God's great love to me, to pardon so unworthy a sinner."

"Did the bird tell you God had pardoned you?"

"No, Sir."

"What made you think he had?"

"What I saw, and my own happy feelings."

"What makes you happy?"

"Because I love God and trust in Christ."

"Would you have loved God if you had not seen the bird?"

"I don't know; I hope so."

"When did you begin to feel so happy?"

"Thursday night."

"Just when you saw the bird, was it?"

"Yes, Sir."

"It is a great pity you did not catch that bird. If the sight of him is so effectual, we could carry him around here among impenitent sinners; and, as soon as they saw him, one after another, they would become happy, excellent Christians, and your bird would be worth more to convert sinners than forty ministers like me. Do you expect to see that bird again?"

"No, I have no such expectation."

"Now, Mrs L——, do you feel sure all that was not a *dream*?"

"It was no dream," said she, seriously. "I was awake. Don't you think *I saw* that light, sir?" said she with an imploring look.

"No, madam; I don't believe you saw any such thing.

I believe *you think* you saw it ; but I believe it was all in your own imagination, and nowhere else."

She shook her head very emphatically, as if fixed in the opposite opinion.

"Mrs L——," said I, "do you ever drink wine, or any stimulating drink?"

"No Sir ; not at all."

"Do you ever take opium or laudanum?"

"Not unless the doctor orders it when I am sick."

"Had you taken anything that night?"

"No ; nothing but our tea."

"Do you drink *strong* tea?"

"No Sir ; I don't like it."

"Are you a nervous woman?"

"At times, I think I am."

"Were you nervous that night?"

"I was not sensible of being so. I was weary, and I felt very *sad*. I was quite excited at times before I went to bed, thinking of eternity to come."

"Mrs L——, can you remember particularly what you were thinking about that evening, just before you retired to rest ? See if you can recollect, and tell me exactly what was in your thoughts just before you lay down."

After a considerable pause she replied,—

"I had been thinking and praying a long time, about my sins and my wicked, miserable heart ; and I tried to give up all into the hands of Christ, as you had so often told me I must. I thought I did, and then I wondered that God did not give me peace. And afterwards I thought how happy I should be, if God would give me a new heart ; and then I wondered how I should know it if He did."

"You thought," said I, "how *happy* you should be, if God would give you a new heart ; and then you *wondered* how you should know it if He did. But you did not think of seeing a bird, or a rainbow?"

She opened her lips as if to answer, but cast her eyes downwards, and said nothing. A slight flush came over

her cheek, but her look was that of sorrow, not of resentment.

Said I: "Mrs L——, I am sorry to trouble you with so many questions, and I do not wish to afflict you. Many things you say to me would almost convince me that you really had peace with God, if these things were not so mixed up with that vision which seems to have been the origin of your joy, and which *I know* was only a dream, or the work of your own imagination, while you were half asleep and half awake. If you rely, in the least, upon that vision, that miracle, as an evidence of your pardon; you rely on a mere fancy, a mere nothing. It is no evidence at all. It is just as much a proof that you will be lost, as that you will be saved. At best, your vision was nothing but a fancy, an imagination, coming from your nervousness, induced by the weariness of your brain when you lay down. I can account for your vision. You have just given me the clue. You had just been thinking 'how happy you should be,' if God accepted you; and you had been 'wondering how you should know it.' With these two ideas you went to bed,—one idea of great *happiness*, and the other of some wonderful thing, (you knew not what,) to lead you to that happiness. Then, in a state betwixt sleeping and waking, (when the imagination is most busy, and the reason and will lie most still,) your imagination just wrought out the *expected wonder*, to teach you something, (or convince you,) and the *expected happiness*, which you so eagerly longed for. This accounts for all you *thought* you beheld. Your eyes saw nothing. As soon as your astonishment and ecstasy had so fully waked you up, that the spell of your imagination was broken, and your eyes really began *to see*; your vision vanished. This is the truth of the whole matter, probably. God had no more to do with your light, your rainbow, and your new-fashioned canary bird, than the devil had.

"Now, Mrs L——, I have only one thing more to ask you; but I am not certain that I can make myself understood. I will try. You know we speak of *remem-*

bering things. We *remember*, because something made an impression on our mind sometime before—a thing capable of being remembered. We recollect the impression: that is remembering. Realities make an impression, and dreams make an impression also. And we remember *both*. But when we remember things that really took place, we have to recall the impression left on our mind *by facts*,—and when we remember dreams, we recall the impression left on our mind *by imaginations* only. Now, there is a difference betwixt the impression left on our mind by real occurrences and the impression left on our mind by imagination only, or by a dream; such a difference, that we are not very apt to mistake a dream for something that really took place. We can remember both, but they are not just alike. The impression of a *dream* is not exactly like the impression made by something when we were *awake*, though it may be very plain and deep. But there is a difference betwixt the impressions, and also betwixt the rememberings. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I know there is."

"Very well. Now I want you to *remember* very carefully what you saw, Thursday night; and tell me whether the impression left on your mind then is *most like* the impression left by a dream, or most like the impression left by something when you were awake. And tell me whether your act of remembering most resembles the act of remembering a dream, or most resembles the act of remembering what took place when you were awake. Do you understand me?"

"Yes Sir, perfectly."

"Very well. Now carefully consider the thing. Take time to think of it. Recollect what you saw Thursday night; and tell me whether your impression and recollection of it most resemble the impression and recollection of a dream, or something *not* a dream."

She sat in silence for two or three minutes, closed her eyes as if absorbed in thought, then rose and looked stu-

diously out at the window, then sat down and closed her eyes for some two or three minutes more.

"Indeed, Sir," said she, "I am at a loss. That *does seem* more like a dream than like a real thing. But I was awake. My eyes were open. I don't remember waking up."

Said I, "I don't wish you to *reason*, or *argue*, or *decide* anything about it, whether you were asleep or awake. I only wish you to tell me as you remember that night, whether your impression resembles most the impression of a dream, or an impression made when you were awake."

After a pause, she replied slowly and thoughtfully,—

"It is just like a dream; but I was awake, for my eyes were open."

"Very well, Madam, I will not trouble you any more. If you want to know what *religion* is, ask your Bible, don't ask night birds, or night rainbows."

I saw this woman afterwards and conversed with her often. Had it not been for her vision, and the use she made of it, she would have appeared to me to be a humble child of God. But I had no confidence in her conversion.

Some few months after this, she proposed to unite with the church. I discouraged her. But after she had lived about a year as a pious woman, so far as I could discover, she was, with much hesitation, received as a communicant; and I knew her for some years afterwards, presenting satisfactory evidence of being a true Christian. In one of the last interviews I had with her, she told me she had become convinced that "the strange sights she saw on that Thursday night, existed only in her own fancy." When I asked what had convinced her, she replied, "I have been sick since then two or three times; and when I was sick and very nervous, I had some other strange sights which I know were fancies, though they seemed as *real* as that one did."

"Perhaps they were *not* fancies."

"Yes, they were, Sir."

"How do you know?"

"Because, as soon as I went to examine into them they were gone. When I got up from the bed there was nothing there."

"Were you always in bed when you saw them?"

"Yes."

"What made you get up to examine?"

"Because I remembered what you said about the bird of Paradise, as I called it, and I was determined to know what these things were."

"But you could not catch them."

"No; as soon as I stirred and got out of bed the charm was broken."

"What were these things you call a charm?"

"Various things, such as splendid colours, beautiful animals, ladies dressed with great taste, and in very rich, gay dresses, and moving like angels."

"Are you asleep when these things appear to you?"

"No, not at all; I am awake and thinking."

"What do think they are?"

"I think they are nothing. But when I have been agitated, and become nervous and tired, after I get a little calmed down, and feel quiet and happy, these beautiful things seem to be before my eyes."

"Do you see them when your eyes are open?"

"Yes, sometimes, when the room is dark."

"Very well, Madam, you have got right now."

"I wish," said she, "you would not say any thing about that bird of Paradise, and the blue globe I told you about at first. I was deceived. I know they had nothing to do with religion, and I do not rely upon them at all as any witness that God has given me a new heart."

The religious treatment of persons of strong imagination and weak nerves, is one of the most delicate and

difficult duties. The imagination has an extent of power over both the intellect and the body itself, of which few persons are suitably aware. The voices which are said to be heard by those religiously affected, the sights which are seen, the instances of falling down speechless and without power to move, the sudden cures of infirmity, said to be effected by the prayer of faith, the deaths which have occurred just as the persons themselves foretold, and for which they made all their temporal arrangements,—all such things are to be attributed to the power of the imagination and excited nerves. Religion has nothing to do with them. Superstition and fanaticism transform them into miracles; but there is no miracle about them. Much less is there any religion in them. Religion is taught in the Bible. Ignorance and nerves should not attempt to add to it. The east wind is not a good gospel minister. Many of its *doctrines* are very incorrect.

In the case of this woman, the proper influences of divine truth were mingled up with the workings of an excited imagination and weak nerves, and her superstitious notions did not discriminate betwixt the two. She at first supposed, with solemn and grateful sincerity, that God had sent this vision to her as an assurance that she was forgiven. And it is not likely that all I said to her would entirely have corrected her erroneous idea, had not her subsequent experience lent its aid. But when she came to have other visions which resembled it, and on examination found them to be fancies only, her common sense led her to the conclusion that nothing but fancy created that beautiful light, that rainbow, that globe of blue, and bird of Paradise. There can be no security against the worst and wildest of errors, but by a close and exclusive adherence to the Word of God, to teach us what religion is.

Superstition.

I WAS sent for by a woman who was in great distress, in respect to her preparation for death. She was fully convinced that she should not live long, though now able to ride out daily, and seldom confined to her bed by her infirmity. She was a member of a neighbouring church; but she said,—“I have no peace of mind, and no witness that God has given me a new heart.”

I had not been acquainted with her before. She appeared to be an unimagi-native, amiable woman, who loved her husband and her children, but she had not a very discriminating mind. Her wealthy, moral, but irreligious parents had done little for her, except to indulge her and train her in the love of money, and the enjoyments it can furnish.

I strove to instruct her in the way of life. I visited her almost every week for a long time. She gained little or nothing in hope. There was something strange about her, which I could not understand. Her mind would be drawn off from the very things which I was most anxious to fasten upon it. One day she mentioned to me what a “bright witness,” as she called it, one of her acquaintances had. She told me what it was. “It was a great light that appeared to her, and filled all the room where she was.” The silly girl who told her this silly story some years before, had sometimes induced her to attend religious meetings with her, among a class of people more apt to see such visions, and more fond of them than I am; and now, the poor woman’s mind was constantly on the look-out for some such “great light.” She said, “I want some witness to myself.” With this expectation her mind

was occupied; it was called off from the truth, and bewildered and confused by this superstition. Again I explained to her the unscriptural nature of all such notions, and taught her that such "great lights" existed only in the imaginations of people, very nervous or very silly, or both. I thought I had succeeded in dissipating her superstitious notions, and for some months (during the lapse of which I often saw her), I had hoped that she was led to put faith before fancy, and look to Christ and not to visions, for comfort and salvation. But after all this, being in trouble she sent for me. I went. She brought up the same story of a "great light," and asked me,—

"Why *don't* I see some such witness?"

"For three reasons," said I; "*first*, you are not *nervous* enough; *second*, you are not *imaginative* enough; *third*, you are not *quite fool* enough."

Then I went over all the explanations of Bible religion again, and all the arguments to demonstrate the superstition of such notions as she had about some external witness, and expel it from her mind. She appeared to be convinced, *said* she was, and for some weeks seemed to enjoy a rational hope in Christ. I had a hope for her.

A few days before her death she sent for me again. She was in deep distress,—in despair. She asked me if I thought she should "not have some such bright witness before she died." She died without it.

Superstition is mischievous. It hinders the exercises of faith, where faith exists; it prevents faith where it does not exist. Superstitious people are silly. The signs they see, the strange sounds they hear, the voices whispering some words or some texts of Scripture in their ears, are nothing but fancies, not facts; and if they were facts, they would be no evidence at all that these persons had become the children of God. Bible evidences of religion are entirely different.

The Whistling Thinker.

"THERE are some instances of religious experience which can never be reconciled to a theological system." The expression of the old gentleman startled me. I was closeted with the Rev. Dr. P——, a man turned of seventy—a divine of a good deal of celebrity in that part of the country. Forty years at least his junior, I had sought opportunity to consult him in respect to some difficulties and peculiarities, which troubled the hearts of two or three of my acquaintances. I wished to *learn*; and I thought from his years, and his high reputation, that he could instruct me.

I had just stated to him the case of an individual, and he made the remark which surprised me. As he did not add any explanation, and as I thought from his silence that he intended to leave me to digest the remark as best I could, while he whistled and looked out carelessly upon the sky; I repeated his words after him, "there are some instances of religious experience which can never be reconciled to a theological system," and then I added,—

"It appears to me, Sir, if that declaration is *true*, then the religious experience of which you speak must be *false*, spurious; or else the theological *system* must be false."

"*Why?*" said he gruffly.

"Because, Sir, if the experience and the system are both *true*, surely they will not quarrel. Lies quarrel sometimes; truths never do. Things that agree with truth agree with each other. If a religious experience agrees with truth, (as certainly it *must*, as far as it *is* religious,) and a theological system agrees with truth, then they are

alike; they need no reconciling. 'Things equal to the same are equal to one another.'

"EUCLID!" said the queer old man; and then he began to whistle again, and look out at the window. In a few minutes he turned to me,—

"All you say is true," said he in a careless manner; "but if you live to preach many years, and become much acquainted with people, you will find some Christians whose experience will not square with your theology."

"Then," said I, "my theology must be *false*."

The old man whistled again. I waited some time for him to finish his tune, doubtful whether he was thinking of me at all, or whether he whistled as a *means* of thinking. At least he ceased from his music; and, turning his clear, keen eyes upon me, he sat for some time in silence, as if he would read my very soul. I thought he was taking the dimensions of my understanding; and concluded, therefore, to wait in silence, until he should get his measure fixed. After awhile, he spoke,—

"My son, don't you think I can defend the proposition I laid down, and convince you of its truth?"

"No, Sir, not if I understand the proposition rightly."

("Whew,— why can't I?—(Whew, whew.)")

"Because the proposition is not true."

"Perhaps it is not," said he; "but suppose you should meet with a person presenting every possible evidence of true religion in his views, and feelings, and conduct, year after year, and yet that same person had never been awakened, never had any change in his views and feelings respecting religion, as converts have, and was not in the least sensible of having been brought out of darkness into light at any time; how would you reconcile that experience with your theology about human depravity, and about regeneration? What would you say of such a person, after a sermon on original sin, or on conversion? How could you say he was 'born unholy and unclean,' as the Psalm Book has it, but had turned to God?"

"I would say, Sir, that God had led him in a way that

I knew not of, perhaps in a way that *he* knew not of, perhaps had renewed his heart in his infancy, perhaps had sanctified him *before* he was born, as he sanctified John and Jeremiah. But I would not admit, that his experience in religion could not be reconciled with my theological system."

After whistling awhile, the old gentleman looked up,—

"Who taught *you* to interpret Scripture? I don't believe Jeremiah, and John, and Paul, were sanctified before they were born. God certainly could have sanctified them then, and I believe He *does* sanctify and save infants,—some that never *are* born;* but the Scriptures do not prove that Jeremiah and John were sanctified before they came into the world. What God says to the prophet, 'Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet,' no more proves that Jeremiah was *regenerated* before he was born, than it proves that he was 'ordained a prophet,' and preached before he was born. The expression has reference only to God's predetermination, or election. The same is the case in respect to John. As to the rest which you said, I agree with all *that*. One may be truly born again, even in infancy."

"Well then," said I, "how can your first declaration be true, that some Christian experiences cannot be reconciled with a system of theology?"

Again he whistled for a long time; then suddenly turning to me, as if he had whistled himself up into a thought,—

"It is *not* true. I supposed that you was a Seminary man, who had got a system of theology, with one leg and one crutch, not able to jump over a stump, and that therefore, you could not reconcile *your* system with the facts you met; and I only wished you to understand that divine realities go beyond human systematizing, and if men

* This is mere opinion or speculation and beyond the line of revelation. All such matters as the sanctification of unborn infants had better be left as Scripture has left them—under the veil of silence.—ED.

will confine themselves to their narrow systems, the Holy Spirit will go beyond them. The church has been greatly injured by such men at times. At one period, nothing but *doctrines* will do; and so doctrines are preached, and prayed, and sung, till metaphysics have frozen piety to death. At another time, nothing but *practice* will do; and then religion soon degenerates into a lifeless form, an outward show, with no great doctrines to put life into the soul. At one period, nothing but Revivals will do, and Revival religion; and then, in the midst of that spirit of fanaticism, diffused by some noisy men all over the churches, a humble, faithful Christian will be looked upon with contempt, because he was not converted in a Revival; and a minister will lose caste, if he does not preach '*Revival, Revival,*' all the time. I have seen this again and again. The church that needs a minister will cry out, 'We want a *Revival* man,—nothing but a *Revival* man will do for *us*?' and so they choose for a minister some proud boaster, who can talk of '*Revival*' more than of Christ. And another result of this proud spirit is, that when it prevails in our churches, our people by-and-by come to undervalue the common means of grace, and they become *periodical* Christians; and then they undervalue the faithful Christian education of their children; they forget that the God of Abraham is still *alive*, and on the throne, a covenant-keeping God; they do not *expect* religious education in the family to be an effectual means of conversion,—they rely upon Revivals. And it soon comes to pass that the Revivals are scenes of mere excitement, delusion, and spiritual pride,—'stand aside, I am holier than thou.' At another period, the opposite error prevails. Revivals are looked upon with suspicion. They are not desired and prayed for. All excitement is feared. And then religion will run down into formality, and people will join the church when they get old enough, or when they get to have a family. There are many truly pious people who have become such under the influence of example and instruction in the family, and under the ordinary Sabbath-

preaching, who never could give you any *special* account, —certainly not a *Revival* account of their conversion. These would not suit a Revival Christian. And Revival converts would not suit *them*. But all such things are wrong. They are the results of narrow systems."

Then he whistled again. But before I could collect my thoughts for any reply, he broke off from his tune in the middle of a bar,—

"*A theological system, Sir, every minister of sense will have.* He cannot get along without it. A man can no more do without *a system* than he can do without *a head*. But what I was after, is *this*; there are men of narrow views, linked to their system, and thinking their system contains all that religion contains; and they would not let anybody cast out *devils* any more than the disciples would, unless he would do it by *their* rule. These men love their system, and preach their system, and live in it, like a worm in a nut, and never get out of it, till, like such a worm, they get wings to fly beyond it. When death gives them wings to fly to heaven, they are out of their jail, and not before. In my opinion, Dr. Woods is such a man as Dr. Porter was before him. Dr. Taylor is such a man, (almost as much fettered as the rest of them.) Dr. Alexander, (one of the ripest saints,) is such a man. Dr. Dwight was such a man. And if you want an instance of such a man, whose fetters every-body can see, (and hear them jingle, too, at every step he takes,) look at Dr. Emmons, (poor fellow!) These are system men. Examine Dwight's Hymn Book. How narrow its range is! How lean! It is worse than one of Pharaoh's lean heifers! It has just a few subjects; and passes over more than half the region of song, without a single note. I never could be confined to it. I would as soon consent to be confined to four tunes. Mear, Old Hundred, St. Martin's, and Durham, would do as well for all our music, as Dwight's Hymn Book for all our poetry.

"Now, my son, never get into a strait-jacket. You will find it pinch. It will make your bones ache. Many

a minister becomes more familiar with his theological system than he is with his Bible; and not only so, but his system stands *first*, and when he gets hold of a text, he interprets it to square with his system, instead of paring and whittling off his system to make it agree with the text; and among his pastoral duties, he sticks to his Calvinism more than he sticks to Christ; and he would *pray* his system too, if the Holy Spirit didn't make his prayers for him. And in this way he systems his Bible into a corner, and his own soul into a nut-shell. Never do *that*, in the pulpit or among the people. 'Preach the Word'—the *Word*, my son,—THE WORD! Are you a Calvinist?" said he, gently, after speaking in a voice of thunder.

"Yes, Sir," said I.

"Then don't be afraid of an Arminian text: don't dodge, when you come across one. *Out with it*; it is *God's* text, and He don't want you to mince it. Are you a Seminary boy?"

"No, Sir."

"*Down on your knees*, and thank God for it."

"I *have* thanked Him, Sir, a hundred times."

"You'll thank Him ten thousand, if you live to my age."

"Are you opposed to what is called Calvinism?" I asked.

"*By no means*. I am a Calvinist. But I let the Bible make my Calvinism, instead of bringing my Calvinism to make my Bible; and I claim the liberty of going along with my Bible, into a thousand corners beyond the limits of the system."

"You mentioned Dr. Taylor with a sort of doubtful compliment about his being fettered; some ministers in my neighbourhood have talked to me a great deal about Dr. Taylor. Let me ask whether you regard him as heretical?"

"No! I don't. But Dr. Taylor has committed the *Connecticut sin*! He is guilty of *thinking*, Sir, of *thinking*; and for that reason, some people over in Jersey and

Pennsylvania, and some in York State, count him a half heretic. But he only *thinks*, Sir, that's all: and *thinking* is his original sin, and actual transgression too. Now, don't join in and cry '*mad dog*' about Dr. Taylor. *Wait*, till you are *sure you see the froth*. His *boys* don't understand him. Dr. Taylor isn't a *Taylorite*. Far from it, Sir. His *boys* are Taylorites, but *he* isn't. I have had long talks with a whole score of ministers educated under him, and I KNOW that *not one Taylorite among them understands* Dr. Taylor's scheme."*

"What *is* his scheme, Sir?"

"His scheme of *doctrine* is John Calvin's, or John Howe's, or Edwards' substantially: his scheme of *philosophy* is his *own* and no honour to him. Why, Sir, he believes in original sin, and in the special influences of the Holy Spirit, (whether his boys do or not,) as much as you or I do. He wouldn't use my *lingo*, or, as he would express it, '*TER-MI-NOL-O-GY*,' because he must have a word as long as *Yale College*, to suit 'the appropriate circumstances of his being;' but he preaches the same doctrines that I do. He is sound at the core. (I don't like his *philosophy*.) But you get into a *fight*, and Dr. Taylor will be one of the best *backers* you could have. He *thinks*."

"You mentioned several men, Sir," said I, "whose praise is in all the churches; but I do not exactly understand in what rank you mean to place them. Do you mean to speak of Dwight, and Taylor, and Alexander, and Emmons, as men of little mind?"

"Not *little*, my son; not *little*; but *limited*, *narrow*. Every one of them is more or less entangled with a system. Dr. Taylor came nearer to be a *free* man than any of the rest of them, when he was young. He flung off the system fetters nobly; but, like a *goose*, he went to

* If this be true, then one is inclined to say he either does not understand it himself, or does not very aptly teach it to his pupils. Or is it too abstruse to be understood? Or, another supposition, is it so one-sided a system as is likely to lead in a wrong direction those who embrace it?—ED.

work and hammered out a pair of his own, and they have galled him worse than the old ones would. The old ones had been used and got smooth—the *rust* worn off. These men are *great* men, *very* great men. They are *good* men : men of truth and faith and devoted godliness. They are *safe* men, *to teach* you on all the fundamental points. I should count you a heretic, and would not ask you to preach for me, if you did not agree with them on all the *fundamentals* ; not because you disagreed with *them*, but because, disagreeing with them, I should know you disagreed with the Bible. My complaint about them is two-fold ; *first*, they let their system limit their scope and range ; and *second*, they put their system *foremost* in all religion.”

“ Well, Sir, do you object to theological systems, catechisms, and confessions of faith ? ”

“ *No, no !* ” said he, impatiently. “ I *thought* you could *understand* me ! I am no opponent of confessions of faith. If a man tells you he will have no creed or confession to stick to, (‘ nothing but the Bible, ’) set him down for a heretic or an idiot, or both. He *has* a creed if he is a Christian at all. And he will stick to it, if he walks in the Spirit, whether he is in the pulpit or in society. Yes Sir ; he has a creed, if he is not a *downright fool* ! Indeed, my young friend, our greatest danger at the present moment, throughout the whole of New England, lies just *here* ; we have too much shortened our creeds, and forgotten our confessions, and ceased to preach the *great doctrines*. The doctrines are the great things after all. One of our prominent men, now preaching in the capital of our State, courts popularity by an occasional sneer at ‘ old dead orthodoxy, ’ as he calls it. He is doing injury to the cause of truth. The seeds of error which he is sowing will spring up by-and-bye. If he does not become a heretic himself, his admirers and followers will. He does not believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, in my opinion ; and, if that was a standard now among our churches, and ministers, as it was once, when the Catechism

was taught in all our schools, we should not have so many *creedless* ministers among us, ignorantly working to undermine the great principles of the Reformation, by sneering at 'old, dead orthodoxy,' like the Rev. Dr.—. They hate the *doctrines*, Sir. So you see I am not against systems and creeds; but I want a minister to have a *creed*, and a *heart* too. I want him to have a system; and then I want him to know that his system does not contain *everything*, and that he himself does not *know* everything. The Bible has a depth, and a richness, and an extent too, in its meaning, which no human system can express. Preach your *text*, my boy, your *TEXT*, *right out*, and not your system."

The old man had waxed quite warm. He forgot to whistle, or look out at the window. I liked to hear him talk, and I was not disposed to have him think me quite such a novice as his manner towards me (though he was kind), seemed to indicate that he did. So I replied,—

"Perhaps I do understand you, Sir, more fully than you give me credit for. But when you say 'if I live to preach many years, and become much acquainted with people, I shall find some Christians whose experience cannot be reconciled with a Theological system,' I must still beg leave to say I do not believe it."

"*I took that back*," said he instantly. "I said that on the supposition that you were a *Seminary* man, cut to the length of the bedstead, and foolishly making your system everything."

"But, Sir, you supposed a case of inexplicable conversion, and asked me how I could reconcile it with my Theological system."

"So I did; but I thought *then* you were a Revivalist, and I wanted to trip up your heels, so that you might pick yourself up and plant yourself on firm ground, and not think that all religion must work exactly according to your Revival mode. I *told* you that I agreed to all you said about that supposed case."

"Perhaps you did, Sir; but you afterwards said 'the

Holy Ghost will go beyond systems;’ while I maintain that as certainly as my system is *true*, human experience in religion will neither contradict my system nor go beyond it.”

“I meant to take that back, my son, I take it back now; if you are not a Seminary man or a Revivalist, or mounted on some other limping hobby. I only employed an expression to set you thinking. Mark me; I am not opposed to Theological Seminaries or to Revivals; I am only opposed to the injuries and abuses that grow out of them. If ministers and their people come to think that nothing but Revival will do, or nothing but a Seminary system will do; true religion will soon be eclipsed, either by fanaticism or bigotry,—and I want you to think about it. If Theological Seminaries would learn their place, and learn to keep it, they would do good. They may be good *servants* of the church, but they will be very bad *masters* of it. They want to be masters. Such is human nature. The church would do well to watch them. Cambridge is a beacon in *my* eye. The seeds of heresy and fanaticism are now sown thick, by those men who seek popularity by crying out ‘*Revival, Revival*, and Seminary, Seminary.’ I am disgusted with their pride and their popularity-hunting.”

The old man turned to the window again, and struck up another tune in a sort of low, whispering whistle. But before I had mustered my thoughts enough to know what to reply, he suddenly turned to me, solemnly,—

“Now we have come here to preach in a Revival. The Revival is God’s work, and I rejoice in it. The converts *here* will appear very much alike; but let us not think that all other true converts must appear just so too, in their awakening, and repentance, and hope. There are many persons, (especially those who have had a careful Christian education, and have always been under the influences of Christian truth and example,) who come to be true Christians, and nobody can tell when they were converted,—they can’t tell themselves. The Holy Spirit has led them

gently and softly along. We can judge of them by their fruits, by their attachment to the great doctrines of truth, and their life of faith. We must not judge of them by the *way* in which they were converted. In all the substantial parts of religion, all true converts will be much alike. Their faith will be the same, their repentance the same, their reliance on Christ the same; and they will all hold substantially the same great doctrines,—(in their *hearts*, whether they do in their *heads* or not,) because it is by these doctrines, law to condemn, and grace to deliver, that the Holy Spirit moulds hearts. He moulds them alike. And for that reason I say that the *doctrines*, Sir, the *doctrines* are our *tools* first, and our *tests* afterward. The Doctrines are the best Revival sermons,—mind *the best*. Nettleton always preaches them. But we must not expect all our people who are converted, to feel them alike suddenly, or alike deeply:—

‘God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.’

But it is God who performs the wonders; and He performs them through His own *truth*. I am willing that He should use the truth suddenly or slowly, and convert a man as He converted Paul, or as He converted John.”

“That is a part of my theological system, Sir,” said I.

“Then you and I agree,” said he, with a smile. “You are not hood-winked or trammelled with a Seminary system or a Revival system. I perceive you *think*; and that makes me like you.”

Turning again to the window, he struck up another tune, as his eye wandered over the valleys and the distant mountains of blue. Whistling seemed to be as natural to him as breathing. He appeared to whistle up his thoughts. And again, before I had time to contrive what to say, he turned to me,—

“Generations have their fashions, their foibles, as much as women about their dress. Seminaries and Revivals are the *fashion* of our age and country. These things have their advantages, but they have their disadvantages

also. The two great dangers of the church in *our* day are these:—the church must have no ministers but Seminary ministers, and no religion but Revival religion. Both these exclusive preferences are *wrong*, foolish, and short-sighted. They do, indeed, partly balance each other; and so our Seminary ministers do not become altogether *book* ministers,—theorizing, speculative, and heartless as metaphysics; and our Revival ministers do not *all* become fanatics, with a bad heart, and *no* head. But the time will come, if God has good things in store for us, when the church will again welcome ministers who have never *seen* a public Seminary, and will welcome converts who do not tell a *stereotyped story* about their Revival conversion. These two hobbies of the age will get old and worn out by-and-bye; and then the church will be wiser than she is now. These hobbies *have* worked well; but the Seminary hobby is very stiff in the *joints*, and the Revival hobby has had his *wind* injured.”

“To hear you talk,” said I, “one would think you believed in a gradual regeneration.”

“I believe,” said he, “in *instantaneous* regeneration in *all* cases. But I do not, on that account, maintain that every regenerated sinner must be able to tell *when* he was regenerated. He may not *know* when, and *never* know till the day of judgment. But, in my opinion, he *will* know *who* regenerated him. I have very much ceased to *ask* persons whom I examine for reception into the church, *when* they became religious, or *how* their minds were affected. Principles are a far better test than mere emotions. They are more *reliable*, and more ascertainable too. My way *now* is, to inquire about their views of *doctrine*, of *truth*, and about some of their religious feelings *at the present time*. In my opinion, many a true child of God is afraid to come to God’s table, and is kept away, simply because he cannot tell such an experience as he has heard of in others, and as he has been led to think universal with all true converts. He has had none of that *blazing* experience, (which I call *comet religion*, because

nobody can tell where it comes from, or where it goes to, or what it is good for,) because he has been led gently to Christ, following the still, small voice, and does not know *when* or *how* he begun to trust Him,—*only*, that God has led him, as he never would have gone of himself. He has had principle, and conscience, and purpose, and faith, but not tumultuous and whirlwind emotion. And, as I said before, in my opinion, there are many true Christians, who have been well taught from their youth, that never can tell *when* they turned to God; and if they attempt to fix on the day of the month, they will fix it *wrong*,—some, too soon, and many, too late.”

“You spoke a little while since of mere excitements, fanaticism, and heresy, Sir. I have a special reason for asking you, what is the fit mode of counteracting such evils?”

Instantly, he replied, with slow and measured words,—

“Preach *on the character of God*. Then, *on the depravity of man*. Then, *on the nature of holiness*. Then, *on secret prayer*! All fanatics have got a new God! My boy, I want you to take notice (put an N.B. to it, in your memory,) how the Bible in order to tear up error by the roots, brings up GOD HIMSELF, and tells what HE is. The old prophets do it, all through: ‘Thus saith the LORD GOD: besides ME there is none else: I change not: holy, holy, holy, is the Lord.’ The Apostles do it. Paul is full of it. He employed it on Mars’ Hill, to convert the Athenian philosophers: he used it to knock over those who doubted about the resurrection; ‘*Thou fool*,’ says he ‘GOD giveth it a body!’ Peter used it; ‘One day with the Lord is as a thousand years!’ All the Divine writers have it. It is their familiar thunder and lightning; and I advise you to borrow a little of it. It will purify the atmosphere all around you.”*

* When the Rev. Mr Backus was ordained successor to Dr. Bellamy, in 1791, there was an aged, pious negro, belonging to the church. Soon after Mr Backus’ ordination, some one asked this negro how he liked Mr Backus, whether he thought him equal to Dr. Bellamy. His reply was: “Like Master Backus very much—great man—good minister, but not equal to Master Bellamy. Master Backus make God big, but Master Bellamy make God bigger.”

In very much this strain, my aged counsellor went on for an hour,—relieved only by a whistling interlude; and sometimes, after a pause, roused again to utter some great truth, by some question which I ventured to ask him. He was full of thought. I have never listened to a man of more independent mind, or whose conversation was more rich in suggestions. He thought deeply and carefully, though perhaps many wise men would be slow to adopt all his opinions about men or about things.

My interview with him was of great use to me. He put me to *thinking*, which, he said, was “all that he aimed at.”*

* This is altogether an interesting and instructive case, notwithstanding the whistling peculiarity of its principal subject. It exhibits an original thinker, guided, but not fettered, by human systems of Theology. Maintaining a just view of the utility of creeds and formularies as exponents of Scripture, while rejecting them as infallible authorities and limitations to inquiry. It preserves the due medium between an unbridled latitudinarianism of opinion, and an adoption of stereotyped methods and forms. Here is supreme reverence for the Bible, and sound orthodoxy, united with freedom of research.—Ed.

The Faults of Christians.

AMONG my parishioners, at one time, there was a very industrious and respectable man, a mechanic, for whom I entertained a high esteem. I thought him a man of talents, and of much good feeling. He was about thirty years of age, was married, and his wife had recently become a child of God, as she believed, and had made a public profession of her faith in Christ. I had now the more hope of being useful to him, on account of his wife's experience of grace, and the uniformly happy state of her mind. He had also some other relatives who were members of my church, and were exemplary Christians. He was himself a constant and attentive hearer of the gospel every Sabbath day, and whenever I met him, (which was very often,) he was free to speak of religion, and confess his obligation and his anxiety to be a Christian. I had no small hope in his case. I had noticed the increasing depth of his seriousness. Besides, I knew him to be a personal friend to myself, very much attached to me, and on that account I had the more expectation of being able to influence his mind upon the subject, which now occupied, as he said, "all his thoughts."

After his wife had become a pious woman and a member of the church, he appeared to become more deeply impressed than ever before. The day on which she was baptized, and came for the first time to the Lord's table, was a most solemn day to him. He afterwards said to me, "when I saw my wife go forward before all the congregation to be baptized, I could not hold up my head, I was forced into tears, and I solemnly resolved to put off my salvation no longer. And I mean to keep that resolution."

After this, I took some pains to see him several times, for the purpose of personal conversation. He was thoughtful, serious, prayerful; and, as I thought, was "not far from the kingdom of heaven." But as the weeks passed on, I was surprised and sorry to find, that his religious impressions appeared to have come to a stand. They did not vanish; I could not say they had diminished; but they evidently had not become more deep and influential. He used to say to me: "I am *trying*, and I hope I shall yet be a Christian." I cautioned him against delay, and against any reliance upon the mere fact, that he *continued* his attempts, while he did not flee to Christ.

In this manner several months passed on. He uniformly appeared solemn, often avowed his conviction of his lost condition as a sinner, acknowledged his need of a Saviour, and lamented the wickedness and hardness of his heart. But finding him, as I thought, very much stationary, I feared that his perceptions of Divine truth were not correct and clear, or that his impressions were only superficial or occasional. And therefore I aimed to deal the more plainly with him, and tried, in every way I could contrive, to bring the Gospel truths more clearly before his mind, and impress them more deeply upon his conscience and his heart. With the Law of God on the one hand, and the Gospel on the other, his conscience to condemn him and Christ to invite him, I hoped his heart would be brought to surrender in faith.

It was in one of these conversations, which I was accustomed to have with him, that he surprised me by expressing a thought, which I had never heard from him before. I had just asked him,—

"What *hinders* you, my dear Sir, from being a Christian indeed, since all the grace of the gospel is so free, and since you are so sensible that you need it?" His answer was,—

"I think a great many more of us would be Christians, if *professors of religion were different from what they are.*"

"That may be," said I; "but you know, each one

shall give account of *himself* unto God.' *You* are not accountable for professors of religion, and *they* are not accountable for your irreligion."

"I know that," said he. "But how can we believe in the reality of religion, when members of the church and the elders too are dishonest, will lie and cheat, and make hard bargains, a great deal worse than other people?"

"Have you any doubt of the reality of religion?"

"Oh, no, I believe in the reality of religion. I believe in a change of heart, as much as you do."

"Then," said I, "*you* can believe in the reality of religion, somehow or other. In that respect *you* have not been misled by our 'dishonest elders and church members,' who drive such 'hard bargains, a great deal worse than other people.' As to the accusation, that our elders and church-members are such dishonest and hard men; I deny it: the accusation is not true. There may be some bad men in the church. There was a Judas among Christ's disciples. One of the chosen twelve was a *thief*. But that was no good reason why other people should reject Christ. The *general* character of our church-members is not such as you have mentioned. You ought not to condemn Matthew and the other disciples, because Judas was a villain."

"Well," said he (with some hesitation), "I know some church-members who are no better than other people, not a bit better than a great many of us who make no profession."

"Perhaps you do. But what of that? Will their imperfections do *you* any good? Will their sins save *you*, or excuse you?"

"Why"—(hesitatingly),—"they ought to set us a better example."

"No doubt of that. And allow me to say, you ought to set *them* a better example. You are under as much obligation to set *me* a good example, as I am to set you a good example. You and I are under the same law. God commands *you* to be holy, as He commands *me*. It is

quite likely, that those church-members of whom you complain, would be better men, if it was not for such persons; as *you*, persons who set them no holy example."

"Well; I believe many members of the church are great stumbling-blocks; I know they are."

Said I, "I believe many, who are *not* members of the church, are great stumbling-blocks; I know they are. You are one of them. You are a stumbling-block and a hindrance to many impenitent sinners, to your partner in business, to your neighbours, to your sisters, and other acquaintances. I am sorry for it, but so it is. If you would become a truly pious man, these persons would feel your influence constraining them to seek the Lord, and your example would be a stumbling-block to them no longer."

"I make no *profession* of religion," said he.

"That is the very thing," I replied. "You stand aloof from religion entirely, as if you disbelieved in it; and your example just encourages others to neglect it as you do. You once told me yourself how greatly it affected you, when you saw your wife come out to be baptized in the presence of the great congregation. If you would set such an example, it would probably affect others."

"*My wife* is a good woman; she lives as a Christian ought to live."

"Then you have at least *one* good example."

"If all professors of religion were like her, I should not find fault with them."

"And if *you* were like her, other people would not find fault with *you*. Your example would commend religion."

"Well; the example of a great many professors does not commend it to *me*."

"Why do you look at the *bad* examples? Look nearer home. Look at your wife's example. You are very unwise to let your thoughts dwell upon the faults of Christians at all; and when you do so, you hunt up a few professors of religion, who are not by any means a

fair specimen of our church-members, and you take *them* as samples of all the rest. That is unfair. I am sorry you have run into this way of thinking. It will only lead you into error, and call off your attention from the eternal interests of your own soul. The faults of others cannot save *you*. I beg of you to think less about other people's sins, and more about your own."

"Well, I will. I know I have had my mind turned away from religion many a time, by thinking of the conduct of professors."

A few days after this I met my friend in the street, and asked him if he thought he had gained the "one thing needful?" He replied,—

"No, I don't think I have. But I believe I am as good a man as a great many who took the sacrament yesterday in your church."

"I am sorry to hear you talk of others again," said I; "you promised me that you would think of your own sins, and let the sins of other people alone. And now the very first sentence you utter, is a reflection upon some who were at the Lord's table yesterday. I am surprised at this. Your hard thoughts about other people will lead you, I am afraid, farther and farther off from religion."

"Very likely," said he, "but *I* can't help it. The members of the church set such examples, that my mind is turned away from religion by them many a time."

"Yes," said I, "the old prophet knew how that was; 'they eat up the sin of my people, and set their heart upon iniquity; they have left off to take heed to the Lord.' You are one of that stamp. You seize upon 'the sin of God's people,' as if it were bread to you; and then you forget to pray—you 'have left off to take heed to the Lord.' After you have eagerly fed yourself upon the 'sin of God's people,' for awhile, then you have no inclination 'to take heed' to anything God says to you. I advise you to eat some other sort of food. 'The sin of God's people' is a bad breakfast. It is very indigestible. The wicked seize upon it as if it were bread to the hungry; and the

worst of it all is, that after they have eaten such a breakfast they have no family prayer; they do not 'take heed to the Lord.' That is your case, precisely; you complain of Christians, instead of praying for yourself. You *never* pray, after finding fault with members of the church for half an hour."

"How do *you* know I don't pray?"

"I know by the text which I just quoted. You '*eat up the sin of God's people*;' and for that reason, I know that the other part of the text belongs to you. You '*have left off to take heed to the Lord*.' Is it not so? Have you not left off, ceased to pray, since you began to find fault with Christians?"

"Yes, I own it. I am not going to deny it."

Said I, "I am very sorry you take such a course. You yield to a temptation of the Devil. The best Christians are imperfect, very imperfect. They do not profess to be sinless. You may see their faults, but you cannot see their penitence, and tears, and agony of spirit, when in secret they mourn over their many imperfections, and beg forgiveness of God, and grace to be more faithful. If *you* felt so, if *you* had done wrong in public through thoughtlessness, or overcome by some temptation, and then in secret should mourn bitterly over your fault; would you think it generous, would you think your disposition well treated, or even had any kind of justice done to it, if your neighbour shall be going around complaining of your faults, as if you were a bad man?"

"No, I should not think I deserved that."

"Very well. These imperfect Christians have such secret mournings. And if you will go to them, and kindly tell them their faults, you will hear things from them which will alter your feelings about them; you will have a better opinion of their hearts than you have now, and a more just opinion too. Did you ever mention to these people the things you complain of?"

"No, I never did."

"I think you ought to do it. 'Certainly you ought to

do it, or cease to make complaints about them to others. Jesus Christ has taught us our duty in such a case. 'If thy brother trespass against thee, go to him, and tell him his fault betwixt him and thee alone.'"

"That applies to Christians."

"It applies to *you*. You ought to be a Christian. And your neglect of one duty cannot excuse your neglect of another. You must not plead one sin as an excuse for another. If one of your neighbours had a bad opinion of you, surely you would much rather he should come and tell you what he had against you, and hear your explanation, than that he should tell it to other people."

"Yes, I should. But I have called nobody's name."

"I know it; and I complain of that. Instead of pointing out the guilty individuals, you complain of Christians in general; and thus you make the innocent suffer with the guilty. You make *religion* suffer, (at least in your estimation,) by the faults of a few, who profess to be religious people. How would *you* like it, if I should speak of the men of your trade as you speak of Christians, and say, 'Blacksmiths are villains, dishonest men?'"

"I should want you to name the men."

"And I want *you* to name the men. Come, tell me who they are, and what they have done; and I promise you I will have their conduct investigated. They shall be tried before the proper tribunal. You shall be a witness against them. And if they are found guilty, they shall be turned out of the church; and then they will be complained of by you no longer, and the good name of religion will no more be dishonoured by them."

"Oh, I can't be a *witness* against anybody."

"Why not? Can't you tell the truth? Will you make religion suffer, rather than bring bad men to justice? Will you injure the good name of all of us, 'church-members and elders too,' as you say, instead of lending your assistance to purify the church from unworthy members? Will you let this thing go on, and let it hinder (as you say it does), a great many of you from being Christians?"

"It is not *my* business to bear witness against church-members."

"Why do you *do it*, then? You *have* been doing it, every time I have met you, for the last three months. And though I have tried to persuade you to cease, you still keep on, bearing witness against 'church-members and elders,' every time I meet you."

"Well, I don't mean to *injure* anybody."

"No, Sir, I don't think you do. The only one you injure is *yourself*. The general imputations which you so often fling out against professors of religion, are *slanders*. They are *not true*. You may *think* them true, but they are *not* true. I affirm them to be utterly unfounded and false. There may be indeed a few persons in the church, who are as bad as you declare them to be; but your general accusations are falsehoods. But suppose all you say, or even suspect, were true; suppose half of our church-members to be bad men; in the name of all that is common sense, I ask you, what has that to do with your religion? If half the money that is in circulation is counterfeit, does that make the good money in your pocket valueless? or will it lead you to refuse to take *all* money?"

"I don't want to have *counterfeit* money?"

"And I don't want you to have a counterfeit religion. The very fact, that you complain of counterfeit money, is full proof, that you believe there is such a thing as good money somewhere: and your complaint of counterfeit religion, is full proof that you believe there is such a thing as good religion."

"Yes, I believe all that."

"And you believe that you have not attained it."

"I suppose I haven't."

"And are you striving to attain it, or are you as anxious and prayerful about it as you were a few weeks since?"

"No, I don't think I am."

"Will you answer me one more question? Has not

your seriousness diminished, and your prayerfulness ceased, very much in proportion as you have had hard thoughts, and made hard speeches about the faults of Christians?"

"I can't say *no* to that question."

"Then I wish you very seriously to consider, whether your fault-finding has not provoked God to withdraw from you the influences of the Holy Spirit! You *do know*, that your regard for religion and your attempts after salvation, have never been promoted by your complaining about Christian people. Thinking of their sins, you forget your own, as I have told you before. You foster in your own heart a spirit of self-righteousness, by your miserable and foolish way. I have warned you against it before, and I will now warn you again, if you will permit me. If you will go on in this way, God will leave you to your deceptions and your impenitence; you will live without religion, and you will die without it! I beseech you, therefore, as a friend, as a neighbour, as a minister, dismiss your thoughts about the faults of a *few*, (for they are only a few,) professors of religion, and seek from God the forgiveness of your own sins, and the salvation you so much need."

I left him. But he never sought me again. Fifteen years have since passed away, and he is still as far from God as ever. Often when I have met him, I have endeavoured to draw him into some conversation upon religion; but he avoids the subject, and commonly shuns me.

The Holy Spirit would lead us to think much about our own sins. It is a dangerous thing for us to dwell upon the imperfections of others. There are many in our congregations, who 'quench the Spirit,' by complainings and hard speeches about communicants of the church. The natural effect of this is just to dispel conviction of sin. "I am as good as many who belong to the church." If

that declaration is true, it is utterly deceptive to the man that makes it. It leads him to think his sin and danger less than they are; it blinds his conscience. I never heard of any mortal, on the bed of death, apologizing for his irreligion by mentioning the faults of Christians.*

* The reasoning of the minister with this objector was very good, and to the point; but, after all, there lies a great and melancholy truth in the objection, that the misconduct of professors does harden sinners in their impenitence. More stumbling-blocks of this kind are cast in the way of irreligious people than by all that infidels ever say or write. Religion, we know, is to be tried by its own evidences,—not by the conduct of its professors: but there are many who *will* judge of it by the latter. Let professors learn from hence a lesson, and avoid the very appearance of evil.—Ed.

Delay, or the Accepted Time.

A young man called upon me one Sabbath evening, and as soon as we were seated, he said to me,—

“I have accepted the invitation that you have so often given from the pulpit, to any who are willing to converse with you upon the subject of religion.”

“I am glad to see you,” said I.

“I don’t know,” he replied, “as I have anything to say, such as I ought to have; but I am convinced that I have neglected religion long *enough*, and I am determined to put it off no longer.”

“That is a good determination,” said I, “‘Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.’”

“Well, I don’t know as that text is for me, because——”

“Yes, it *is* for you,” said I, interrupting him.

“I was going to say, Sir, I don’t suppose I have got so far as that yet, so that salvation is for me *now*.”

“You *told* me that you was ‘determined to put off religion no longer;’ and therefore I say, ‘now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.’”

“But I don’t wish to be in a hurry, Sir.”

“You *ought* to be in haste. David was. He says, ‘I thought on my ways and turned my feet to thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.’ God now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent, and you are one of them. And if you are like David, you will ‘make haste and delay not’ to keep God’s commandments.”

"I don't suppose I am in such a state of mind, as to be prepared to become a Christian *now*."

"Will disobeying God put you in a *better* state of mind, do you think?"

"Why, I don't know; but I have not much deep conviction. I know that I am a sinner against God, and I wish to turn to Him, and live a different life."

"Then turn to Him. Now is the accepted time."

"But I find my heart is full of sin; I am all wrong; I feel an opposition to God such as I never felt before."

"Then repent and turn to God instantly, while it is called to-day."

"But I don't suppose I can be ready to come to religion so *quick*."

"You *said* you *was* determined to put it off no longer, and I told you 'now is the accepted time.'"

"But I never began to think seriously about my religion till last Sunday."

"And so you want to put it off a little longer."

"Why I want to get *ready*."

"And are you getting ready? You have tried it for a week."

"No Sir," said he in a sad manner, "I don't think I am any nearer to it than I was at first."

"I don't think you are. And I suppose the reason is, that you don't believe 'now is the accepted time.'"

"Oh, yes, I do; for the Bible says so."

"Then don't wait for any other time. Repent *now*. Flee to Christ *now*, in 'the accepted time.'"

"I have not conviction enough yet."

"Then it cannot be the 'accepted time yet.'"

"But I have not faith enough."

"Then it cannot be 'the accepted time.'"

"Well, Sir, I,—I,—I am not ready *now*."

"Then it cannot be 'the accepted time' *now*."

"But it seems to me, it is too *quick*," said he earnestly.

"Then it cannot be 'the accepted time,' and the Bible has made a mistake,"

"But, Sir, my heart is not *prepared*."

"Then it is not 'the accepted time.'"

With much embarrassment in his manner, he replied,—

"What *shall* I do?"

"Repent and turn to God, with faith in Christ to save you as a lost, unworthy sinner, *now* in 'the accepted time.'"

He appeared to be in a great strait. He sat in silence with very manifest uneasiness for a few moments, and then asked,—

"Is it possible that *any one* should repent, and give up the world, and turn to God *so soon*, when I began to think about it only last Sunday?"

"Now is the accepted time," said I.

Again he sat in thoughtful silence, and after a time he asked me,—

"Is *salvation* offered to sinners *now*?"

"Yes, *now*. 'Now is the day of salvation.'"

"But it seems to me I am not *prepared* now to give up the world."

"That very thing is your difficulty. *You* are not prepared; but 'now is the accepted time.' You wish to put off your repentance and conversion to Christ till some *other* time; but 'now is the accepted time.' You and your Bible disagree. And if nothing else kept you from salvation, this would be enough. I beseech you, my dear friend, delay no longer. Now is God's time. 'Deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Jesus Christ.' You told me you was determined to put off religion no longer. I suspected you did not know your own heart, and therefore said to you 'now is the accepted time.' And now it has become manifest, that you meant to put off religion till some other time, all the while."

"It seems hard to shut up a man just to the present time," said he, in an imploring accent.

"If you were a dying man, and had only an hour to live, you would not say so. You would be glad to have the Bible say to you, 'now is the accepted time,' instead

of telling you, you needed a month or a week to flee to Christ. It is *mercy* in God to say to you, 'behold now is the day of salvation,' when you do not know as you will live till to-morrow morning."

"Will you pray with me?" said he.

I prayed with him, and we separated. The last words I uttered to him, as he left the door, were, "now is the accepted time."

Just one week afterwards he called upon me, "to give an account of himself," as he said,—

"I have got out of my trouble," said he. "Now, I trust in Christ, and I am reconciled to God, or at least I think so. I thought you were very hard upon me last Sunday night, when you *hammered* me, and *hammered* me with that text,—'now is the accepted time.' But I couldn't get away from it. It followed me everywhere. I would think of one thing, and then that would come up, 'now is the accepted time.' Then I would begin to think of something else, and it would come up again 'now is the accepted time.' So I went on for three days. I tried to *forget* that text, but I *could not*. I said to myself, there is something else in the Bible except that; but wherever I read, that *would* come to my mind. It annoyed me and *tormented* me. Finally, I began to question myself, *why it was* that this plagued me so much? And I found it was because I was *not willing to be saved by Christ*. I was trying to do something for myself, and I wanted more time. But it was not done. Everything failed me. And then I thought, if 'now is the accepted time,' I may go to Christ now, wicked as I am. So I just prayed for *mercy*, and gave up all to Him."

The idea of this young man was new to me. It had never entered my mind that when one wants more time, it is "*because he is not willing to be saved by Christ*." I suppose that is true. A delaying sinner is a legalist. Self-righteousness delays. How little the procrastinating know about their own hearts!

Physical Influence.

A MEMBER of my church, the mother of a family, was sick, and I visited her. In conversation with her I discovered that her mind was shrouded in darkness and gloom. I prolonged the conversation, hoping to be able so to present divine truth to her mind, that she should see some light, and gain some comfort from the promises; or if I failed in that, hoping to discover the cause of her religious darkness. But it was all in vain. I left her as dark as ever, without discovering the cause of her gloom.

I soon visited her again. She was the same as before.

"Dark! dark! *all* dark?" says she, in answer to my inquiry. "I have not long to live, and I am sure I am not fit to die." She wept in agony. I pointed her to Christ, and recited to her the promises. I explained justification by faith in Christ Jesus, the undone condition of sinners, salvation by free grace, the offer and operations of the Holy Spirit, and the readiness of Christ to accept *all* that come unto Him. She only wept and groaned.

With much the same result I conversed with her many times. I could but imperfectly discover what had been the character of her religious exercises while she was in health; but she despised them all, and counted them only as deception. When I treated her as a backslider, and referred her to what the Sacred Scriptures address to such persons, inviting them to return unto their God; the very freeness and friendliness of the invitations appeared to distress her. When I treated her as a believer under a cloud, a child of God, from whom our heavenly Father takes away the light of His countenance, for some reason which we cannot explain,—perhaps to manifest His

sovereignty,* perhaps to teach us our spiritual dependence, perhaps to arouse our efforts to draw nearer to Him, perhaps to teach us deeper lessons about religion, and give us richer experience as He leads us, for a time, "in a way we know not,"—all these ideas appeared to increase her distress. If I treated her as an impenitent sinner, it was the same thing. Gloom, distress, despair, had taken possession of her soul!

After I had known her to be in this condition for several months, I called upon her, and to my surprise found that her mind was calm; her despair and distress had given place to hope and gladness of spirit. She could trust in God, she could submit to His will, rejoicing to be in His hands, she could rest upon the sufficiency of her Saviour;—"Jesus Christ is mine," said she, "and I am glad to be His."

Three days after this, when I saw her again, her light had departed, and all her former darkness and despair had returned. A few days afterwards, I found she had become calm and hopeful again, and then again in a few days I found her as gloomy as ever. Thus for months she alternated from gloom to gladness, and from gladness to gloom. I could not understand it. I studied her case, and tried in every mode I could think of, to find out why she should thus be tossed about betwixt hope and fear. But I studied in vain.

After awhile, as I was conversing with her one morning, when she was in one of her happy frames, I recollected that she had always been so whenever I had seen her in the morning, and always been in darkness whenever I had seen her in the afternoon. I mentioned this fact to her, and asked her to account for it. She acknowledged the fact, but made no attempt to explain it. I explained it to her, as the result of her physical condition. Every morning, she awoke free from pain, and then her views were clear, and her mind comfortable. She continued in this comfortable

* Is this true? Does God ever, in a way of mere sovereignty, and by a positive act, take away the light of his countenance?—Ed.

frame till nearly noon, when, as her pain in the head returned, all her peace of mind vanished. This experience was uniform with her, week after week; and when I now called her attention to it, and explained her religious gloom as the result of her physical state, she was satisfied that the explanation was just. But, a week afterwards, when I saw her in the afternoon, her mind was as dark as ever; and then she rejected the explanation; she could not be made to believe that her darkness was owing to her disease. So it was with her, week after week. She had a comfortable hope every morning; she was in despair every afternoon. In the morning she would *believe* that her afternoon despair was caused by her bodily infirmity; but in the afternoon, she would entirely *disbelieve* it. Thus she continued.

A few weeks before her death, and when her bodily condition had become different, all her darkness was gone, her mind continued light through the whole twenty-four hours; and she finally died in peace, with the full hope of a blessed immortality through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Despondency does not always arise from the same cause. It is difficult to deal with it; but there is one great principle, which has been of much use to myself, and which has some illustration in the following sketch.

Treatment of the Responding.

IN making visits to the sick, I became acquainted with a woman belonging to my congregation, with whom I had very little acquaintance before. She was in a very distressful state of mind. "I am a sinner," says she, "I am the vilest of sinners! I must soon meet my God, and I have *no preparation* to meet Him! I see before me nothing but His wrath, His dreadful wrath forever! Indeed I feel it this moment within my soul! It drinks up my spirit! God curses me now; and oh! how can I bear His eternal curse, when He shall cast me off forever!"

"God is *merciful*, Madam," said I.

"I know He is merciful, Sir, but I have despised His mercy; and now the thought of it torments my soul! If He had *no* mercy, I could meet Him: I could take the curse of the Law, and it would not be the half of the hell which now awaits me! But oh! I *cannot bear*,—I *cannot* bear the curse of the *Law* and the *Gospel* both! I must account to the Lord Jesus Christ for having slighted His offers! I have turned a deaf ear to all His kind invitations! I have trampled under foot the blood of the covenant! and I am soon to appear before Him, my *feet* wet with his blood, instead of having it sprinkled on my heart!" (She wept and wailed, as if on the borders of the pit.)

"Madam, there is *no need* that you should appear *thus* before Him. The *same* offers of mercy are still made to you, which have been made to you before. The same throne of grace still stands in heaven; the same God is seated upon it; the same Christ reigns as Mediator; and the same Spirit is still promised 'to them that ask Him.'

The invitation of God is as broad as the want of sinners : ' Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' "

" I know it, Sir ; I know all that. And this is the burden of my anguish—the offer is so free, and I have no heart to accept it ! If the offer was accompanied by any difficult conditions, I might think myself partly excusable for not accepting it. But it is all so free, and, *fool* that I am, I have all my days shut up my heart against it ; and even now, I am rebellious and unbelieving. Oh ! my heart is senseless as a brute's ! it cannot feel ! it is *harder* than the nether millstone ! "

" I am glad you are sensible of that ; because it prepares you to understand the promise, '*I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you.*' *God* says this ; and you perceive He makes His promise for just such hearts as yours."

" Oh, I wish I could believe it ! My heart won't believe. It disbelieves God ! It makes Him a liar, because it believes not the testimony which God gave of His Son ! "

" Madam, think a moment ; if you did *not* believe that testimony, you could not be distressed on account of your *unbelief*. If you were hungry, and you did not believe there was any food upon the earth, you could not be distressed because you did not *believe* there was food enough. You might be distressed because there was no food, but you could not be distressed because you did not *believe* there was any ; you would not wish to believe in a falsehood, or in what you deem a falsehood."

" I have not any doubt of the *truth* of God's Word, Sir ; but my heart does not *trust* in it. It *will* not trust. I have no faith."

" You have sometimes thought you had faith ? "

" Yes, I *did* think so ; but I was deceived. I have made a false profession. I have profaned the Lord's table ! When I was a young woman, in Scotland, I first came forward, and I have attended on the ordinance of the table

ever since, whenever I could. But I see now that I have been only a mere professor—one of the foolish virgins. For forty years I have been a communicant; and now, when my days are nearly done, the Lord frowns upon me for my sin. I feel it; I feel it. His wrath lies heavy on my soul! He knows I am an empty hypocrite, and he frowns upon me in His awful displeasure!”

“How long since you found out that you had no true faith?”

“I have suspected it a great many times, but I was never fully convinced of it till since I have been confined to the house with this sickness.”

“Before you was sick did you enjoy a comfortable hope in Christ?”

“I *thought* I did, almost always after I observed my first sacrament. That was a very solemn day to me. It was before I was married. I was nearly twenty, and my parents and the minister had often enjoined my duty upon me; and after a long struggle with my wicked heart, and after much prayer, I thought I was prepared. But I deceived my own soul! I have been deceived ever since till now; and now God fills me with terror! I shall soon meet him, and he will cast me off.” She wept piteously.

“Have you lived a prayerful life since you came to the communion first?”

“Yes, I have prayed night and morning; but I see now that I never prayed acceptably.”

“Are you penitent for your sins? Do you mourn over them?”

“Yes, I mourn; but I have ‘only a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.’ My soul is in torment! God will cast me off? I shall be lost for ever! *lost! lost!*”

“It is a faithful saying and worthy of ALL acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to *save* sinners.”

“I believe it, Sir. He is a great and glorious Saviour.”

“*Your* Saviour, Madam, if you want Him to be.”

“*No, Sir; no, not mine; not mine.*” (Again bursting into tears.)

"Yes, Madam,—*Yours*, if you want him;—*yours* in welcome;—*yours* now, on the spot;—*yours*, if you will 'receive and rest upon him, as he is offered in the Gospel;'—*yours*, if you have never received him before;—*yours* still, even if you have profaned his covenant, as you say, for forty years. You have only to believe in Him with penitence and humility. Christ is greater than your sin."

As I was uttering these words, she continued to repeat the word, "*No, no, no, no*," weeping most distressfully. said I,—

"Madam, suffer me to beg of you to hear me calmly."

"I will try, Sir."

"I utter to you *God's own truth*, Madam. I tell you Jesus Christ *is* for you. He is *offered* to you by the God of heaven. He proposes to be your Prophet, Priest, and King, to do for you all you need as a sinner to be saved. He is an all-sufficient Saviour. And in the presence of his merits, *I defy your despair*. Salvation is of grace—of *God's* grace,—of grace operating in the infinite love of God, and by the infinite humiliation of his Son. Here is fulness, the fulness of God. 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.' Jesus Christ did not fail in his attempt, when he undertook to redeem sinners. He did His work well. His love brought Him from Heaven, and took Him through all the path of His humiliation, from the cradle to the grave. *He* bore the curse, and sinners may go free. He reigns in heaven, the King of glory, and sinners may meet Him there."

"Indeed, Sir, he is a wonderful Lord. He hath done all things well. I am glad He is on the throne. When I can catch a glimpse of His glory, my heart rejoices."

"And His glory lies in grace, madam; *such* grace that He invites you to cast all your cares upon Him, for *He careth* for you."

"I praise Him for it; I will praise Him forever. I rejoice that Christ *is* Lord over all."

She appeared to have lost her trouble. She had become calm; and she continued to speak of the love of God, and

the adorable condescension of Jesus Christ, for some minutes. She asked me to pray with her, and praise God for His wondrous grace. After prayer I left her, supposing that her despondency had been but for a few minutes, and would not return.

The next week I saw her again, as she had requested me to do; and I found her in the same deep despondency as before. She continued to speak of herself; and all I said to her gave no alleviation to her anguish.

Several times I visited her. Uniformly I found her depressed, and sometimes left her rejoicing, and sometimes sad. I could not account for it.

At length it occurred to me, as I was thinking of the different conversations I had had with her, that her mind had uniformly become composed, if not happy, whenever I had led her thoughts *away* from herself, to fix on such subjects as God, Christ, redeeming love, the covenant of grace, the sufferings of the Redeemer, the Divine attributes, or the glory of God. Afterwards I tried the experiment with her frequently, and the result was always so. I finally stated to her the fact.

"Oh, yes, Sir," said she, "*I know that very well.* It has always been so with me ever since about the time I observed my first sacrament. If I can get my mind fixed on my covenant God and Saviour, then I can rest. But how can I rest when I have no faith?"

"But, Madam, can you not *remember*, in your dark hours, what it was that made you have light ones? and can you not then recur to the same things which made them light, and thus get light again?"

"Oh, Sir, I *cannot see the sun through the thick clouds.* God hides himself, and I cannot find him; and then I mourn. I know it is Satan that would drive me to despair. He shoots out his 'fiery darts' at me, and my poor soul trembles in anguish. I cannot help trembling, even when I know it is Satan. I have such awful doubts, such horrible temptations darting through my mind, and such blasphemous thoughts, that I feel sure God will cast me off."

This woman never recovered from her sickness ; but the last ten weeks of her life were all sunshine. She had not a doubt, not a fear ; all was peace and joy. Alluding to this, she said,—

“God does not suffer the adversary to buffet me any more. Christ has vanquished him for me, and I find the blessed promises are the supports of my soul. I fly to them. I fly to Christ, and hide myself in Him. I expect soon He will ‘come again and receive me to Himself,’ that I may be with Him ‘where He is.’ I shall behold his glory, and Satan shall never torment me any more.”

She died in perfect peace.

There is a difference betwixt the despondency of a believer, and the despondency of an unbeliever. A desponding believer still has faith. It only needs to be brought into lively exercise, and his despondency will melt away. He becomes desponding, because he has lost sight of the objects of faith, and has fixed his thoughts upon himself and his sins. Let the matters of faith be brought up before his mind, and they are *realities* to him,—unquestionable realities. He only needs to keep his eye upon them.

The despondency of an unbeliever is different. He does not despond, because he has lost sight of the objects of faith, for he never *had* any faith ; and there is, therefore, no preparation in his heart to welcome the doctrines of grace, of free forgiveness, of redemption through the blood of Christ, of eternal life for sinners. These things are not *realities* to him. His faith never embraced them. When, therefore, in his despondency, whether he looks at his own wickedness or looks at God, he sees only darkness. Especially, the love and mercy of God, the death of Christ for sinners, *all* redemption, are things as dark to him as his own soul. He does not realise them as facts ; much

less does he embrace them for himself. In the self-righteousness of his spirit he desponds, because he thinks himself too guilty to be forgiven. He is a mere legalist; he sees only the *law*,—not Christ.

But there is only one way of relief for believer and unbeliever in their despondency. They must look to Christ, and to Christ *alone*, all-sufficient and free. A believer has a sort of preparation to do this; an unbeliever has an obstinate reluctance. He thinks only of himself and his sins. Nothing can magnify equal to melancholy, and nothing is so monotonous. A melancholy man left to himself, and the sway of his melancholy, will not have a new thought once in a month. His thoughts will move round and round in the same dark circle. This will do him no good. He ought to get out of it.

Despondency originates from physical causes more than from all other causes. Disordered nerves are the origin of much religious despair, when the individual does not suspect it; and then the body and mind have a reciprocal influence upon each other, and it is difficult to tell which influences the other most. The physician is often blamed, when the fault lies in the minister.* Depression never benefits body or soul. "We are saved by hope."

* Yes, and it is equally true the minister is often blamed when the fault lies with the physician. One of the most delicate and difficult things a skilful physician of souls has to do, is to distinguish between physical and religious despondency. Some who come to me in distress of soul, I recommend to go at once to their medical attendant.—Ed.

The Stormy Night,

OR PERSEVERANCE.

THE most remarkable instance of protracted and determined perseverance in seeking God, that has ever come within my knowledge, was that of a young married woman, whose seriousness commenced soon after I visited her at her own house, for the first time. The conversation that I then had with her, as she afterwards told me, "led her to make up her mind that she *would* seek the Lord, and would not stop, till she believed her salvation was secure." The one consideration, and so far as I could ever ascertain, the only one, which had any special influence to lead her to form this resolution and begin to act upon it, was taken from the assurance I gave her in my first conversation with her, that salvation was within her reach,—that she might be a Christian if she would,—that she would not seek the Lord in vain, if she only sought Him with all her heart. "You told me, Sir," said she to me, years afterwards, "I should not seek God in vain. Your words were (I remember it well and always shall), '*I know*, Mrs E——, that you will be saved, if you seek God with all your heart.'"

She tried to do so. She came to my house for conversation with me about her salvation, almost every Sabbath evening for nearly two years. In the depth of winter, on a cold stormy night, the wind blowing violently, the snow drifting into the path, in places more than two feet in depth (as I found on accompanying her home),—one of the most unpleasant and even terrific nights for a woman to be abroad; she came nearly half a mile to my house,

alone. As I opened the door for her admission that stormy night, I uttered an expression of surprise, "Why, Mrs E——! are you here on such a night?" And I shall never forget the severe, *deserved* rebuke, which she unwittingly gave me, many months afterwards, in reference to that expression. "It stumbled me," says she; "I did not know what to make of it. You had invited us there, and I thought you would be expecting me. I thought you ought not to be *surprised* to see me there, if sinners were in danger of the everlasting wrath of God and might escape it, as you had preached that day. It was a long time before I could get over that stumbling-block. I thought, if you had *believed* what you preached, and felt about it as I did, you would *expect* to see me. I know it was a stormy night and I was afraid; but I kept thinking as I went, that the day of judgment would bring a worse storm, as you said once in your sermon—'hail-stones and coals of fire.' " This she said to me more than a year afterwards, and after she had attained hope in the mercy of God through Christ Jesus.

At the same time, she told me another thing, which added keenness to her unintentional rebuke. She said, that her husband (at this time an irreligious man), was very unwilling that she should venture out on that stormy night, and strongly urged her to stay at home, when he found she proposed to go. "But," says she, "he told me afterwards that my going to your house that night, was the first thing which brought him to reflection; for he thought there must be *something* about sin and religion which he did not know anything about, if I would go to your house in such a storm, all alone. I did not know it at that time; but when he told me afterwards, I remembered that he looked very cross when I came home, and I thought he was angry because I went. But I was not going to mind *that*. I knew I had done rightly, and I was not going to let anything turn me aside from trying to be a Christian. And don't you remember, three Sunday nights after that, he came to your house with me?"

Month after month, this woman's deep anxiety continued. I never could discover why she lingered so long in her unbelief. Again and again, I aimed with all possible carefulness to tell her all the truths of the gospel, and to discover what error, sin or temptation, kept her from repentance and peace with God. But I never could discover her hindrance: and she never could tell me, then or afterwards, of any difficulty or temptation, which had troubled her, except the expression I made to her on that stormy night. And in justice to her I ought to say, that she did not mention that as having been a hindrance, though she called it a stumbling-block; but mentioned it casually and in another connection—not to find fault with me, and not to account for her continuing so long in unbelief. Far from this. She was one of the most modest of women, and one of the most affectionate and devoted friends I ever had. Nothing, I am sure, could ever have tempted her to find fault with me, or utter a syllable with any intent to censure me or wound my feelings. *Before* that memorable night of storms, when her presence surprised me, she had been for months an anxious inquirer.

It was a most painful and perplexing thing to discharge my pastoral duty to this woman. I could not understand her state of mind. She was frank, she concealed nothing, she told me all her heart, she was desirous of being interrogated. She was, moreover, an intelligent, well-educated woman, and trained in early life by religious parents. But I could not even conjecture what kept her in her unbelief, since, for so long a time, she had known the truth, and had such powerful strivings of the Holy Spirit.

And what then could I say to her? How could I hope to do her any good?

She came to me so many times, and I had so many times told her all that I knew about the way of salvation, and so many times presented to her every motive of the gospel, and invited and urged her to cast herself upon Christ, that I did not know what more to say or do; and time after time I was half sorry to see her come into my

house, and then ashamed of myself because my heart had such a feeling. I knew not what to do. At one time I was on the point of telling her that I had nothing more to say to her, and she need not come to me again. But I could not do it. She was so miserable, so sincere, so determined, docile, and confiding, that it was impossible for me to cast her off. I afterwards rejoiced that I had not done it. Her husband became pious, her sister, and others of her friends, all of whom began to seek God after she did; and yet, there she stood, the same unhappy, unconverted sinner. She did not advance, and she did not go back. Time after time I assured her that her lingering was unnecessary, and would gain her nothing,—that she had but to trust herself to the arms of Christ out-stretched to receive her,—that ‘without faith it was impossible for her to please God,’ or gain an item of profit to her own soul. A hundred times I cautioned her most solemnly against putting any trust in her perseverance, for that she was persevering in the wrong course while in her unbelief, and the farther she went, the worse would be her condition. Time after time, the Bible in my hand, and she in tears before me, as a minister of God, and on his authority, I offered her a free salvation, and demanded her heart’s faith, and instant submission to divine authority and unbounded love. Her mind, her conscience, her heart, I besieged with all the kindness of Christ. I explained to her such passages of the Scriptures as ‘the marriage which a certain king made for his son,’—and ‘the prodigal,’ who, in a far country, ‘began to be in want.’ All would not do.

As far as I could discover, she had for many weary months a full conviction of all the great doctrines of the Bible, of the entire depravity of her heart, of her sin and danger under the law as a condemned sinner, of the impossibility of her salvation but by Christ, and of the full and free salvation offered to her in the love of God, on the ground of the great atonement. I have never spent half as much time with any other awakened sinner,

or uttered to any other one half as many threatenings and promises of God, or kneeled with any other half as many times in prayer. But so far as I know, she never received any benefit from it all, unless that was a benefit which she one day suggested to me long afterwards, when she said, "If *you* had been discouraged with me, *I* should have been discouraged,—and should have given up trying to be saved."

She persevered. She became a child of hope and peace. She united herself with the people of God; and now, after more than thirteen years, she still lives in the enjoyment of Christian hope. Neither she nor I,—yea, nor her husband, will ever forget that *stormy night*.

Ministers ought never to despair of the salvation of any sinner. To despair of any one, is just the way to make him despair of himself. Many have been ruined in this way probably. We ought to *expect* sinners to repent,—and treat them accordingly. Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel? It took me long to learn the lesson, but I have learnt *never to give up a sinner*. We must urge the duty of an immediate faith and repentance, as the Bible does so continually; but we should be careful to enjoin this duty *in such a manner*, that if it is not immediately *done*, the individual shall not be led or left to cease seeking God. Many a sinner turns back, when just at the door of heaven.

The Brown Jug.

IN the course of my pastoral visits, I called upon a man who was a member of my congregation, a farmer, between fifty and sixty years of age, a plain man, accustomed to daily labour. He was not a communicant, and I had no reason to think him to be a pious man. He was a regular attendant upon the religious services of the Sabbath; but I had never seen him in any religious assembly at any other time. He was regarded as a respectable man, I believe, in all respects. His wife was a pious woman, whom I had sometimes conversed with, and who had expressed to me her anxiety in regard to the religious state of her husband. He had been for so many years living under the means of grace, without being led to repentance and faith in Christ; that she was afraid his mind had settled down upon some ruinous error, or into a strange stupidity, so that he never would become a Christian. She said she had often talked *to* him on the subject of his religious duty; but he seldom entered into any free conversation upon it; indeed, "he would say almost nothing at all about himself." He would *hear* what she had to say, without any opposition, and with apparent willingness; but he seldom made any reply, except to make some general acknowledgement of the importance of the subject. He had a family of children, the most of whom had already arrived at the years of manhood, and none of them manifested any disposition to obey the gospel in spirit and in truth. They were a moral and industrious family. The sons were much like their father, with the exception, that they less frequently were seen at church. The family resided some distance from my residence, and

I had not known them very intimately, except the mother, as the rest of the family were usually absent in the field, when I called at their house.

Before the time to which I refer, I had never found this man at home ; nor had I been able to converse with him at all in reference to his religious duty. Soon after I entered the house, his wife retired from the room, and left me alone with him. I immediately addressed him on the subject of religion. He appeared candid and solemn. I found that he had no hope in Christ. He said that religion had, for many years, appeared to him as a solemn and important duty. He wished he was a Christian. He said he was fully sensible, that he was a sinner in God's sight, and was exposed to his righteous justice. He referred to the sermons which he heard from Sabbath to Sabbath ; and said it was a wonder to him, that they did not influence him more. But he supposed that he had "little true conviction of sin," and little sense of his real condition, or he should be a different man.—In this manner he spake of himself very freely, for a long time.

He appeared to me to be a man of respectable mind, rather slow in thought and in his sensibilities, but of some discrimination.

I urged him to give his instant and prayerful attention to his salvation ; but he did not seem inclined to yield to my solicitation. I pressed it upon him strongly. I recited to him the promises of God, made to them that seek him ; and the threatenings of God against the neglectors of salvation. Still he appeared unmoved. I then concluded to put together, in a manner adapted to his cast of mind, some of the most urgent appeals that I could think of. I commenced. Said I :

"You are already somewhat advanced in life. Your remaining years will be few. You have no time to lose. You have lost enough already. If you do not become a follower of Christ soon, you never will. You have a family of children. You have never set them an example of piety. You have never prayed with them as you ought to

have done. Your neglect goes far to destroy all the influence which their mother might have over them. They copy your example. God will hold you accountable for a father's influence. You may be the cause of their ruin, because,—

"That often troubles me," said he, (interrupting me in the middle of what I designed to say.)

"It *ought* to trouble you. It is a serious matter, for a father to live before his sons without acknowledging God, without prayer, without hope, just as if he and they had no more interest in the matter of religion than the beast, whose 'spirit goeth downward to the earth.'"

"Yes, indeed it is," said he. "And I am now getting to be an old man, I wish I could get religion."

"You, *can*. The whole way is clear. God's word has made it so."

"I *will* begin," said he, emphatically. "But I wish you would make a prayer with us. I will call in Mrs E—— and the boys."

He immediately called them.

After my saying a few words to each of them, and briefly addressing them all, we knelt together in prayer. As we rose from our knees, he said to his children, very solemnly:—"Boys, I hope this visit of our minister will do us all good. It is time for us think of our souls." I left them.

The next Sabbath they were all in church. At the close of the morning service I had some conversation again with the father. He appeared to be honestly and fully determined to "deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus Christ."

He continued very much in this state of mind for some months, sensible of his need of Christ to save him, and prayerful for Divine mercy. I saw him and conversed with him many times. He did not appear to make any progress either in knowledge or sensibility. He did not go back; but he was stationary. He prayed in secret. He prayed in his family. He studied his Bible. He

conversed with me freely. He sought opportunity for conversation. Uniformly he appeared solemn and in earnest. But he found no peace with God, no hope in Christ. Evidently he was in deep trouble of mind.

As he was not a man of much cultivation of mind, I aimed to teach him the truth in the most plain and simple manner. I proved everything, and explained everything. It was all in vain. Months rolled on. He continued in the same state. It was impossible to discover or conjecture what kept him from Christ. His condition filled me with solicitude; but I studied it in vain.

I made inquiries about him among his friends and neighbours, to learn, if possible, his whole disposition and his character of mind. But I soon discovered, as I thought, that I knew him better than anybody else.

More than six months after he began to give his prayerful attention to his salvation, as I was riding towards his house, just at a turn in the road, where it wound round a hill, which hindered our seeing each other till we were close together, I suddenly met him. He was riding in his one-horse wagon towards the village. I stopped my horse to speak to him, and I thought he appeared disposed to pass on. But as the road was narrow, and I had stopped my carriage, the wheels of our vehicles almost touched each other, and he could not well get by. We had a long conversation, as we sat in our carriages, in that retired and romantic spot. But I discerned no change in his religious feelings. He was as determined, but as hopeless as ever.

At length my eye happened to rest on a brown jug, which would contain about two gallons, and which was lying on its side, under the seat of his wagon. The thought came into my mind, that he might be accustomed to the use of stimulating drinks, and that that might be an injury and a hindrance to him in his religious endeavours. I had never heard or suspected that he was an intemperate man. Probably the idea never would have occurred to me that strong drink might be his hindrance, had I not been utterly unable to account for his stationary condition in

respect to religion. I instantly resolved to speak to him on that subject. But it was an awkward business. I did not know how to begin. I would not insult him, and I did not wish to injure his feelings. He was an old man, near sixty—old enough to be my father. And to suggest the idea, that he might be guilty of any excess, would seem to be cruel and uncalled for. But I thought it my duty to make some inquiry. So I began:—

“Mr E., where are you going this morning?”

“I am going to the village—to the store.”

“I see you have got a jug there, under your seat; what are you going to do with that?”

He cast his eye down upon it, a little confused, for an instant, as I thought; but he immediately replied:—

“I am going to get some rum in it.”

“Are you accustomed to drink rum?”

“I never drink any, to hurt me.”

“You never drink any, to do you any good.”

“I have thought it *did*, sometimes. I do not drink much.”

“Do you drink it every day?”

“No, not every day, commonly. We had none to use in the field, this year, in all our haying, till we came to the wet meadow; when the boys said we should get the fever, if we worked with our feet wet, and had nothing to drink.”

“So you have used it, since that time. You carry it into the field, I suppose?”

“Yes; we commonly do, in haying and harvest.”

“Well; at other times of the year, do you keep it on hand, in your house?”

“Yes; I always *keep* it. But it is only a little that I drink; sometimes a glass of bitters, in the morning,—or, when I am not well, and feel that I need something.”

“Mr E., when you are perplexed, annoyed, or in some trouble; do you never take a drink, on that account?”

“I am very apt to. It seems to keep me up.”

“Well, now, just tell me: for a good many months

back, since you have been troubled on the subject of religion, have you been accustomed to resort to it, 'to keep you up?'"

"Yes; at times. I feel the need of it."

"In my opinion, that is the *worst* thing, my dear friend, that you *could do*!"

"Why, I only drink a *little*, at *home*. I have not carried it into the field, except in haying time."

"So I understand it. But one question more: Have you not often, at home, when you have felt downcast in mind, on account of sin, taken a drink, *because* you felt thus troubled?"

"I believe I have done it sometimes. I cannot tell how often. I never thought much about it."

I had become convinced by this time, that he was at least in danger; and that it was not at all an improbable thing, that his drinking just kept him from repentance. I told him so; and then began, with all my sagacity and power of persuasion, to induce him to quit all intoxicating drinks *for ever*. At first, he appeared not to believe me at all. He heard me, just as if he had made up his mind, and did not care what I said. His eyes wandered carelessly around, over the fields and trees, and then turned upon his old horse, as if he was impatient to start on, and get out of the way of a lecture which he disbelieved. After a time, however, and while I was stating to him some facts within my own knowledge, to show the uselessness of strong drink, he became apparently interested in what I was saying. He listened, and I went on with my plea. As I explained the effect of intoxicating drink upon the mind, and upon the feelings, and the conscience of men, he hung down his head, and appeared to be lost in thought. After a while, as I kept talking, he cast a glance at his jug; then looked up; and then his eyes fell back upon his jug again. I kept reasoning with him; but he did not look at me any longer,—he did not appear to be thinking of what I was saying. He appeared rather to be engaged in deep thought; and his eye often

turned upon his jug. By-and-by he slowly reached down his hand, and took hold of it. With a very solemn countenance, and without saying a word,—(he had not spoken for half an hour,)—he placed the brown jug upon his knee. I talked on, watching his silent motions. He turned his head very deliberately around, one way and the other, as if he was looking for something; his eyes glancing here and there, as if he did not see what he desired. I kept on talking to him.

Just at the spot where we were, the road swept politely round a huge stone, or side of a rock, which rose about ten feet above the path; and as those who built the road could not get it out of the way, the path made rather a short turn round it. This rock was within three feet of of his wagon. His eye fixed upon it, and then glanced back to the jug upon his knee. Then he looked at the rock, and then at his jug again, and then at me. And thus his eye continued to wander from one to another of these three objects, as if it could not get beyond them. At first I was in some doubt which of the three was the most attractive to his eye,—the rock, the brown jug, or myself. But in a little time I noticed that his eye rested on the brown jug *longer* than on me. At length I was lost sight of altogether, (though I continued talking to him,) and his eye glanced backwards and forwards, from the brown jug to the rock, and from the rock to the brown jug. All this time he maintained an unbroken silence, and I kept on with my lecture.

Finally he seized the poor jug by its side, wrapping the long fingers of his right hand half round it, and slowly rising from his seat, he stretched up his tall frame to its full length, and lifting the brown jug aloft, as high as his long arm could reach, he hurled it, with all his might, against the rock, dashing it into a thousand pieces. "*Whoa! whoa! whoa!*" (said he to the old horse.) "Hold on here. Whoa! whoa! Turn about here. Whoa! We will go home now."—The horse had suddenly started forwards, frightened at the clatter of

the brown jug, and the pieces which bounded back against his legs and side. The start was very sudden and as my long friend was standing up, it came near to pitch his tall figure out of the wagon backwards. However, he did not fall. As he cried "whoa! whoa!" he put back his long arm upon the side of the wagon, and saved himself. He soon stopped his old horse; and deliberately turning him round in the street, till he got him headed towards home, he put on the whip, and without saying a word to me, or even casting a parting look, he drove off like Jehu. I drove on after him as fast as I could; but I could not catch him. He flew over the road. And when I passed his house, about a mile from the jug-rock, he was stripping off the harness, in a great hurry. We exchanged a parting bow, as I drove by; and I never spake to him about rum afterwards.

Within a single month from this time, that man became, as he believed, a child of God. His gloom and fears were gone; and he had peace, by faith in Jesus Christ.

About a month afterwards, as I passed the spot, where such a catastrophe came upon the jug, and where my long friend came so near to be toppled out of his wagon; I noticed that some one had gathered up some pieces of the unfortunate brown jug, and placed them high up, on a shoulder of the rock. I saw them lying there many times afterwards; and thought that my friend had probably placed them there, as an affecting memorial.—He might have done a worse thing.

Unknown Presence of the Spirit.

As I was passing along the street one morning, I saw a lady, a member of my church, just leaving her house, and I supposed she would probably be absent a half an hour or more,—long enough for me to accomplish what I had often desired. There was a young woman, a member of her family, who was very beautiful, and reputed to be quite gay, to whom I had sometimes spoken on the subject of religion, but I had never found any opportunity to speak to her *alone*. I had thought that she was embarrassed and somewhat confused by the presence of this lady, whenever I had mentioned the subject of religion to her, and, therefore, I was glad to seize this opportunity to see her alone,—such an opportunity as I thought the lady indisposed to furnish me.

I rang the bell, and the young woman soon met me in the parlour. I then felt some little embarrassment myself, for I had rushed into this enterprise through an unexpected occurrence, and without much premeditation of the manner in which it would be most wise for me to proceed. I expected a cold reception, if not a repulse. I deemed her a very careless, volatile girl. I thought she would be unwilling to have me urge the claims of religion upon her; and the idea that much depended upon the manner in which I should commence, embarrassed me for a moment. But I soon came to the conclusion that I owed it to honesty and truth, to my own reputation for frankness, and to my young friend herself, to tell her plainly what was my intention in then calling to see her. I did so, in the most direct manner possible.

"I am *very* glad to see you," said she. "I have wanted to see you for a good while; for I want to tell you my feelings. I thank you for thinking of me, and being so kind as to come and see me. I should have gone to your house many a time, when you have so often invited persons like me; but when the hour came, my courage always failed me, for I did not know *what* to say to you. I am in trouble and know not what to do; I am *very* glad of this opportunity." She opened to me her whole heart in the most frank and confiding manner. Among other things she said,—

"I know I have been a thoughtless girl," (while her voice trembled, and tears dimmed her eyes,) "I have been gay and have done many things you would condemn, I suppose; but, my dear minister, *I have been urged into gaiety*, when my *heart was not there*. I do not believe I am such a girl as they think I am, may I say, as *you* think I am? I know I have a wicked heart, and have too much forgotten God; but I have often wondered *what there is about me*, that makes my religious friends think that I care for nothing but——" She sprang from her seat, clasped her hands upon her face, and hurried out of the room, sobbing aloud.

In a few moments she returned. "I know you will pardon me for this," said she, the tears still coursing down her cheeks, "I do not wish to make any excuse for my sins, nor do I wish to blame *any one* for supposing me thoughtless; but I am sure I *want* to be led in the right way. *I am ready* to do all you tell me. I hope I can be saved yet."

"*Certainly* you can be, my child."

"Then tell me, Sir, what to do."

I did tell her, and left her, one of the most grateful and affectionate creatures that ever lived.

As I took my leave of her and found myself again in the street, I commenced my old business of street meditation. My first emotion was gladness, the second shame: for I was ashamed of myself, that I had just been thinking

of that girl so differently from what she deserved, and that I should have gone into her presence, and opened my lips to her with no more faith in God. The next reflection was, how much more common than we think, are the influences of the Holy Spirit. God does often what we never give Him credit for doing. The influences of the Holy Spirit are more common than our unbelief allows us to think.

The inquiry then came into my mind, may there not be others of my congregation who would welcome me also? I stopped in my walks, and looked around me for another house to enter. I saw one; I rang the bell, and asked for the elder of two sisters, a girl of about nineteen I suppose, and reputed to be very fond of gaiety. She soon met me, and I immediately told her why I had come.

"And I *thank* you for coming," said she. "I am glad you have spoken to me about religion. Why did you not do it before? I *could not* go to your house. I know it is my duty to seek Christ, and I *do want* to be a Christian."

After some conversation with her, in the whole of which she was very frank, and in the course of which she became very solemn, I asked for her sister.

"Yes, Sir, I will call her. I was going to ask you to see her; but *don't tell her* anything about *me*."

Her sister came; and as the elder one was about to leave the room, I begged the younger one's permission for her to remain, stating to her at the same time why I had asked to see her. She consented, and the elder sister remained, I thought, gladly.

I then stated to the younger my message, and having explained her condition to her as a sinner, and explained the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, I was urging her to accept the proffered salvation, when she became much affected; she turned pale, covered her face with her hands,—"I *will try* to seek God," said she, sobbing aloud. The elder sister, who had delicately taken her seat behind her so as not to be seen by her, clasped her hands together,

overcome with her emotions, and lifted her eyes to heaven, while the tears of gladness coursed down her beautiful cheeks, as she sat in silence and listened to us.

I prayed with them, and soon found myself again in the street.

I immediately entered another house in like manner, and for the same reason as before; and another unconverted sinner met me with the same mingled gladness and anxiety, manifesting the same readiness to seek the Lord.

By this time I had given up all thought of finishing a sermon which was to have been completed that day; for if I could find, among my unconverted parishioners, such instances of readiness and desire to see me, I thought my duty called me to leave my study and my sermons to take care of themselves, and to trust in God for the preparation I should be able to make for the pulpit on the coming Lord's day. I therefore went to another house, and inquired for another acquaintance, who was not a member of the church. I did not find her. But in the next house after *that*, which I entered, I found another of my young friends, who told me she never *had* paid any particular attention to the demands and offers of the gospel, but that she would "neglect it *no longer*;"—"I *will*, Sir, attend to my salvation," said she, "as well as I know how."

Here, then, I had found five young persons, in the course of a few hours, all of whom were "almost persuaded to be Christians." They all afterwards became the hopeful subjects of grace; and within six months of that morning were received as members of the church. I knew them all intimately for years, prayerful, happy Christians.

The strivings of the Holy Spirit are more common than we think. If unconverted sinners would improve these secret calls, none of them would be lost. These persons

had been awakened before. Probably at this time, as formerly, they would have gone back again to indifference, had not their seriousness been discovered and confirmed. It is important to 'watch for souls.'*

* This is a fine example of ministerial solicitude, diligence and earnestness. But what courage, judgment, and caution does it require in any one who would imitate it? Yet is not this seeking and saving those that were lost? Such a line of action *can* be pursued only by those who are *known* to be wise in saving souls.—ED.

What can I do?

IN a pleasant interview with a young woman of my congregation, who had recently been led to a hope in Christ, she particularly desired me to see her brother. She had had some little conversation with him, and thought he would be glad of an opportunity to speak with me, for he had some difficulties which she thought troubled him. I immediately requested the favour of seeing him, and in a few moments he came to me. Said I,—

"I asked to see you, Sir, because I wished to speak with you on the subject of religion. Have you been considering that subject much?"

"Yes, Sir, a good deal, lately."

"And have you prayed about it much?"

"I have prayed sometimes."

"And have you renounced sin, and accepted the salvation which God offers you through Christ?"

"No, I don't think I have."

"Don't you think you *ought* to?"

"Yes, if it was not for one thing I would."

"What thing is that?"

"The doctrine of election."

"How does that doctrine hinder you?"

"Why, if that doctrine is true, I can do nothing."

"What can you do if it is *not* true?"

"Why, I don't know," said he, hesitatingly, "but what have *I* to do? *I* can do nothing. It is not my business to interfere with God's determinations: if he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, as the Catechism says he has."

"Well, do you think he *has*?"

"*Yes!*" said he, (with an accent of much impatience.)

I then tried very carefully to explain to him our duty, our freedom of will, our accountability, God's gracious offers of both pardon and assistance; and that God's secret foreordination is no rule of duty to us, and can be no *hindrance* to our duty or salvation. As I thus went on in the mildest and most persuasive manner I could, his countenance changed, he appeared vexed and angry, and finally, in the most impudent and passionate manner, exclaimed,—

"I don't want to hear any such stuff as that! If God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, what have I to do?"

"Just what He tells you to do," said I.

"I can do *nothing*," he replied furiously.

"Did you eat your breakfast this morning, Sir?"

"Yes, to be sure I did!"

"How could you do it, if God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass? *you* can do nothing. Did you eat your dinner to-day?"

"Yes, to be sure; I don't go without my dinner."

"What did you eat your dinner for, if God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, as you say he has? What have *you* to do? You can do nothing. Do you mean to go to bed to-night?"

"Yes; I shall try."

"What will you '*try*' for? What have *you* to do? You can do nothing. If God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, it is not your business to interfere with God's determinations. Will you answer me one question more?"

"Yes."

"Why do you say '*yes*'? What have *you* to do? You can do nothing. God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and you have no business to interfere with his determinations."

He appeared to be confused, if not convinced; and after a few more words, I asked him if he could tell me

plainly what he himself meant, when he said he could do nothing.

"No," said he, "I don't know *what* I mean."

"Can you explain to me how, in your view, the foreordination of God makes you incapable of doing anything, or hinders you?"

He hesitated for some moments, and then answered,—

"No, *I* am not able to tell anything about it."

I then carefully explained to him his duty, his freedom of will, his accountability to God, and earnestly strove to persuade him to dismiss his cavillings and come to immediate repentance, as God requires, and as a rebel against God ought to do, while mercy solicits him to salvation. He seemed to be somewhat affected; and when I explained to him more fully that the foreordination of God did not take away his liberty, power, or accountability, he appeared to be convinced. I invited him to come to me, if he ever found any more trouble or hindrance, or difficulty of mind, and tell me what it was. But he never came. He frequently muttered some objection to his sister, on the ground of predestination; but he never afterwards introduced that subject in conversation with me. Yet I was not able to persuade him to be a Christian; and now, after fifteen years more of his life have passed away, he still remains in his sins; entirely neglecting all public worship, manifestly a hardened sinner.

It is not safe for a sinner to trifle with Divine truth. The falsehood, insincerely uttered as an excuse, comes to be believed as a truth. Sad state,—given over to believe a lie!

The Harbrest Past,

OR THE DYING UNIVERSALIST.

MORE than sixteen years have now passed away, since the occurrence, of which I am now to write, made its first impression upon me: but I am still unable to recall the scene to my mind, without the most painful emotions. There was something in that whole scene too horrible for description. And I would much rather, were I to consult my own feelings, pass it over in silence, and let a veil be drawn over it for ever, than have the recollection revived by copying the notes made respecting it. But several of my friends have urged the publication; and I yield to their judgment.

I was hastily summoned to the bedside of a sick man, by the urgent request of his mother. He was yet a young man, I suppose about twenty-six years of age, was married, and the father of one little child. I had never spoken to him. I knew there was such a man, but I did not know him personally. His mother, who was a communicant in the church, had often mentioned him to me; and his wife, who was a woman of very serious turn of mind, though very modest and reserved, had sometimes mentioned to me her husband, in a manner that showed me, that his treatment of the subject of religion was a matter of sorrow to her. But I had no personal acquaintance with him. Whenever I had visited the family, he had either been absent from home, or intentionally kept himself out of my sight,—which, as I suppose, he had often done. Sometimes, but very rarely, I had seen him at church, not knowing, at the time, who he was. And I did not suppose he had ever been in church for

years ; till, when I saw him on his sick bed, I recognized him as one whom I had seen in church, and had taken for a stranger. He was an industrious man, prosperous in his business, and as a man of the world, bore a good character.

His father was a Universalist, and the son had imbibed his principles. I had known this before. His mother had mentioned it to me, with much sorrow. She had also requested me to converse with the old man, her husband, and I had more than once attempted to do so ; but he very soon excused himself by pretending that his business was urgent, and he could not spend the time. I had also known him to leave the house and go off into the field, when he knew that I had called to see his family, and when he had good reason to suppose, that I would request to see him. I have no doubt that he did this, on purpose to avoid me. His son, who was now sick, had also, as I suppose, avoided me in the same manner. He still resided in the house with his parents, who had also another son, a lad about twelve years of age. These persons, with an infant child of the sick man, made up the whole household.

As I approached the house, I was startled at the groans of the sick man. I could hear them distinctly into the street. As I entered the door, his mother met me, calm in her deportment, but evidently in the most heart-rending distress. She looked the very image of woe. She briefly told me how her son was ; and it was very easy to perceive that she expected he would die. She did not wish him to know that I had come at her request. She had not told him that I was coming. But she desired me to go in immediately, and converse with him and pray with him.

As I entered the sick man's room, and as she called my name and told him that I had come to see him ; he cast a sudden look at me, appeared startled, and turned away his face towards the wall, without uttering a word—as if he regarded me with horror. I approached him familiarly

and kindly, offered him my hand, which he seemed reluctant to take, and feeling his feverish pulse, aimed to soothe him, as much as I could.

He had been taken suddenly ill with a fever, accompanied with violent pain in the chest, back and head. He was in the most excruciating agony, tossing from side to side, and his groaning and shrieks would have pierced any heart. He was a large robust man, and his whole appearance indicated a vigour of constitution seldom equalled. His gigantic frame was yet in its full strength, and as he writhed in his spasms of pain, I thought I had never seen such an instance of the power of disease. This man of might was shaken and tossed, like a helpless leaf.

When he became a little more quiet, I enquired about his sufferings, and aimed to soothe and encourage him, expressing the hope that he might soon be believed. In an accent of intolerable agony, he exclaimed ;—“ *Oh ! I shall die ! I shall die !*”

“I hope not,” said I, “by this sickness. I see no reason why you should not get well. And I think the doctor will be able to relieve you in a few hours.”

“The doctor has done what he could,” said he, “my time has come ! I cannot live ! Oh ! I shall die !” And raising himself up suddenly, leaning for a moment upon his elbow, he threw himself back upon the bed and drew the covering over his face, holding it there with both his hands.

I again attempted to soothe his agitation, gently requesting him to be as quiet as possible, and assuring him I did not think that the doctor regarded his case as hopeless. Whether he gave any attention to my words I could not tell ; for he kept his head buried in the bed clothes, and firmly resisted the gentle attempts of his wife and his mother to remove them. In this manner he lay for several minutes, still groaning as in agony. I asked him several questions, but he made me no answer.

Thinking that he might perhaps feel embarrassed at my presence, after speaking to him for a few moments,

I took my seat in another part of the room, and conversed familiarly with his wife and his mother, aiming to remove his embarrassment, if he had any, by proposing something for his relief, and by such an ease and familiarity, as should lead him to regard me as a friend. This had the desired effect. He gradually removed the bed-clothes from his burning face, and attentively listened to our conversation. With an imploring and despairing look, he stared at his wife, and then at his mother. Time after time, his fixed gaze was turned from the one to the other ; but I noticed, his eyes never rested on me. He seemed to avoid looking at me. If his mother or his wife spoke, his eyes would turn upon them at the sound of the voice ; but if he heard a word from me, he did not notice me at all.

I had retired from his bed-side and taken my seat by the window, as I thought that would be a more delicate mode, than to stand by him, at least for a few minutes. He became more composed, and entirely still. After he had uncovered his face and listened for a few minutes, I rose to approach him. His mother, anticipating my design, and as I thought sensible of his reluctance to speak to me, rose and approached him before me. Calling him gently by name, she told him, that I had come to see him, and inquired if he "would not like to have me pray with him." Instantly, stretching both his hands towards the heavens, he raised himself on his bed, and holding his hands still aloft, as far as he could reach, he uttered the single syllable, "*Oh!*" with a dreadfulness of accent and a prolongation of the sound, which made my blood curdle in my veins. His wife and mother turned pale—the former sinking into a chair from which she had just risen. This sudden and singular action of the sick man led me to believe he was in agony of mind. It did not seem like the action of bodily distress. It was altogether different. Thinking it the best way to induce him to express his feelings to me, I enquired :—

"Has your pain returned?"

Still holding his hands aloft, and without looking at me, he exclaimed in a tone of horror, "Oh! oh! oh!"

"Are you in great pain?" I asked.

Another groan was his only answer.

"I am sorry to find you so ill," said I.

He uttered another groan—a dreadful shriek!

His wife sobbing aloud left the room.

I then said to him, "God is merciful. He is the hearer of prayer; and if you are"—

"*Oh!*" was the dreadful sound from his quivering lips which interrupted me; it was a shriek, which rang through the house; and every one of the family hurried into the room where he was. Among others was his little brother, who was the only one he seemed to notice. He glanced, once or twice, at him, and thinking he was about to speak to him, I remained silent. As he sat thus erect in his bed, with his hands stretched aloft to the utmost of his power, his eyes fixed on vacancy before him, and his lips uttering only his dreadful monosyllable, as a scream apparently of horror, he was the most pitiful object my eyes ever beheld.

"Shall I pray with you?" said I.

He flung himself back violently upon his bed, turned his face away from me towards the wall, and again drew the clothes over his head. We knelt by his bed-side, and continued some time in prayer. He had not spoken to me at all. But it appeared to me that his agony was quite as much mental as bodily; and I aimed to pray in such a manner, that he might be soothed and encouraged by the idea of the mercy of God towards sinners, through our Lord Jesus Christ. During prayer he remained entirely still; but I could distinctly hear his deep breathing, and feel the bed shake, as a long breath rushed from his lungs. I continued in prayer for some six or eight minutes, I suppose, longer than I should have done, had not this exercise appeared to quiet him, and had it not been the only mode, by which I appeared to be able to make any religious idea find access to his mind.

When we rose from our knees, his face was uncovered ; and turning his eyes upon me, then upon his mother, then back upon me again, he seemed to be on the point of speaking to me, and I stood by him in silence. With a look and tone of decision, he exclaimed—as he fixed his eyes firmly upon me :—

“It will do no good to pray *for me*, Sir.”

I waited for him to say more, but as he did not appear to be inclined to do so, I replied :—

“God is the hearer of prayer : he has encouraged us to pray to him : *he* has not said, that it will do no good to pray.”

“*My* day has gone by !” said he. “It is too late for me !—it is too late !”

“No, Sir ; it is *not* too late. If you want God’s mercy, you may have it. God himself says so : ‘Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely.’ You ought to think of the death of Christ for sinners,—of the mercy of God.”

“*Mercy ! mercy !*” he vociferated ; “that is what makes my situation so dreadful ! I have despised mercy ! I have scoffed at God ! I have refused Christ ! If God was only *just*, I could bear it. But now the thought of his abused mercy is worst of all ! There is *no mercy* for me any longer ! For years I have refused Christ ! My day has gone by ! I am lost ! I am lost !”

“You think wrong,” said I, “God has not limited his invitations. Christ says, ‘Come unto me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden.’”

“My day has gone by !” said he.

“No ; it has *not*,” I replied, in a voice as firm as his own : “Behold *now* is the accepted time—*now* is the day of salvation.”

“That is not for *me* !” said he : “I have had my time and lost it ! I have spent all my life for nothing. I have been a fool all my days, and now I am dying ! I have sought for nothing but this world ! I have refused to attend to God, and now he has taken hold of me, and I

cannot escape!" (The family, much affected, retired from the room.)

"You have time still to seek him, to repent and flee to Christ. You have time *now—to-day*. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Pray to God. You may be saved."

"You think so," said he; "but I know *better*—I *know* better! It is too late! I am dying, Sir!"

"Christ accepted the dying thief," said I. "God is so rich in mercy, that he pardons sinners at the eleventh hour."

"The eleventh hour is past!" said he. "This is the *twelfth* hour! God's time of vengeance has come! I have had my time, and lost it! It is all gone! I have loved the world only, and now I must leave it! Oh, fool! fool! What is the world to me? Oh! how could I live so? I have been a fool all my days!"

He uttered these desponding expressions in the most firm and decisive tone. And as I was aiming to convince him of the mercy of God, and referring to the Scriptures, all I could say did not seem to weigh a feather with him.

His wife and his mother hearing our conversation, had returned to the room, and seated themselves, in silence, at a distance from his bed. And just as he was uttering some exclamations about his love of the world, and his folly, his father entered the room, and hearing his expressions for a little while, he approached the bed, saying to him:—

"Why, you need not feel so bad: you have never done any hurt to anybody."

"*Don't talk to me, father,*" said he, in a tone of authority, or rather of hatred and anger. "You have been my worst enemy! You have ruined me! You led me to disobey God, and neglect the Bible! You led me into sin when I was only a little boy! You took me off to fish and hunt, Sundays, and stroll around the fields, when mother wanted me to go to church. You told me

there was no hell, that all men would be saved. And *don't come here now to try to deceive me any longer! You have done your work! You have been my ruin!*—Oh! if I had minded mother, and not *you*, I should not have come to such an end!—Don't cry, mother, don't cry so," —(he heard her sobbing.) "You are a good woman: you have nothing to be afraid of. God will take care of you. Don't cry so. Oh! I would give a *thousand worlds*, if I owned them, to have your religion—or any part of it—or anything like it! But I am lost! I am lost!—You told me, father, there was no hell, and I tried to believe it. I joined you in wickedness, when I knew better. I have laughed at hell; and now hell laughs at me! God will punish sinners! He has taken hold of me, and I cannot get out of his hands!"

His father attempted to say something to him; but the son would not allow him to finish a single sentence. The moment he began to speak, the son exclaimed:

"Quit, father! Don't talk to me! Your lies cannot deceive me any longer! You have ruined my soul!—Where is my brother?"

As he made this inquiry, his wife rose, and coming near to the bed-side, replied:

"He is out in the garden, I believe. What do you want of him? Shall I call him?"

"Yes; call him. He is young. I want to tell him not to believe what father says to him—not to be influenced by him. He will lead him to hell. Now, when he is young, I want him to know what Universalists say is false. I don't want *him* to be led into sin, as father led me. I want him to believe what mother says to him; and read the Bible; and pray, before praying is too late; and not break the Sabbath-day; and attend church; so that he may not die as I am dying."

His father looking at me, remarked:—

"He has had so much fever and pain, that his mind is not regular."

"Father! *I am no more crazy than you are!* You

need not deceive yourself with that notion! But you are *not* deceived. You know better! You *try* to deceive yourself, just as you try to believe there is no hell. You pretend that all men will be saved; but you don't believe it. You led me to talk in the same way, and laugh at the warnings in the Bible against sinners. When I was a little boy, you began to lead me into sin! Don't come here to torment me with your falsehoods now, when I am dying!"

At this moment, his little brother, about twelve years of age, whom he had asked for, entered the room. Calling him by name, and looking tenderly upon him, vastly different from the look he had just bent upon his father, he said:—

"Come here, my brother. I am going to die, very soon; and I want to tell you something. I want you should remember it after I am dead. You are young now, and I want you to begin to live in the right way. I have been a very wicked man. Don't do as I have done. Read the Bible. Never swear, or take God's name in vain. Always go to church, Sundays. Always mind what mother says to you. Father will lead you into a very bad way, if you are not very careful. He led me into sin, when I was a little boy, like you. He has led me to ruin, because I was fool enough to yield to him. If I had done as mother wanted me to, I might have died in peace. She is a good woman.—Don't cry, mother, do not cry so:" (sobbing aloud she left the room:)—"If father ever says there is no hell for the wicked, don't believe him. There is an awful hell! Remember that I told you so, when I was dying! If father ever says, that all men will be saved, never believe a word of it. The wicked will be turned into hell! Dear boy! It is a pity that he should be led to ruin. Never believe what the Universalists say. Believe your mother; and don't let father lead you into sin. Be a good boy. If I could live, I would tell you more another time. But I must die!"

The young brother had stood by him weeping, mani-

festly struggling hard to control his emotions, till entirely overcome he cried aloud in a burst of grief, and rushed out of the room.

While he was talking to his little brother, the father listened for a time, apparently unmoved, and then with a sort of stealthy tread went out.

It was one of the most affecting scenes. His mother, who had returned again to the room, his wife and myself, subdued to tears, sat for some time in silence. It was enough to melt a heart of rock. But the sick man never shed a tear. I had hoped, when he spake so tenderly to his mother, and when he began to talk so affectingly to his little brother, that his own sensibilities would have been excited in a tender manner, and be a means of overcoming the stern and dreadful stubbornness of his resolute despair. But there was none of this. His voice never faltered. His eye never moistened. His burning brow never quivered.

I again attempted to converse with him; but he manifested no disposition to hear me. He did not even reply to any question. Recollecting how he had appeared a little while before, when I prayed by his side, I proposed to him, that I would make a short prayer with him, before I left him.

"Not here!" said he, firmly. "Pray in the other room, if you wish to pray. Do not pray here. I cannot pray. And I will not pretend it. I am beyond praying. My day is gone by! The harvest is past! Mother, I wish you would go into the other room, if you want to pray."

We retired to another room, where we found his father, who had probably heard all that he had said. The old man appeared to be unaffected. And when I spake to him about the necessity of preparation for death, he seemed as indifferent as a stone. As the rest of us kneeled in prayer, he sat looking out of the window.

Before I left the house, I returned again to the room of the sick man. He appeared very uneasy and restless, but I did not think his pain was bodily. The doctor came in,

felt his pulse, asked some questions, prescribed for him; and saying he thought he would "be better to-morrow," left him.

"I shall be *dead*, to-morrow," said he, firmly, without changing his position, or appearing to regard the presence of any one.

Briefly assuring him again of the mercy of God, the readiness of Christ to save him, and exhorting him to prayer, I bade him good-bye, (to which he made no answer,) and left him.

After I was gone, (as I afterwards learnt,) he remained very much silent, seldom even replying to any question, but, from time to time, tossing from side to side, and groaning aloud. His father brought him a paper, (as I was told,) which he wished him to sign as his will. He refused to sign it. Again the father brought it. It was read to him. Witnesses were called. He refused to sign it. "Father," said he, fiercely, "you have led me into sin, into the snares of the devil; you have ruined me forever! And now you want me to sign that paper, to take away from my wife and child all their support! *You know* it would not be right for me to sign it. Take it away!"

Repeatedly during the night, his father urged him to sign that will. He steadily refused to do so, and sometimes stated the reasons for his refusal. But at last, the son signed it, wearied out with the ceaseless importunity, or what is more probable, in a moment of insanity, unconscious of what he was doing. Be this as it may, the will was set aside afterwards by the court.

Early the next morning I returned to see him. The doctor had just left him, still giving his friends encouragement that he would recover, though he said he had "not expected to find him so bad as he was, but his symptoms were not unfavorable." I suppose he formed his opinion without regard to the state of the sick man's mind; and on this ground I have not a doubt his opinion was right.

As I entered the room, I was struck with his altered appearance. He looked ten years older than when I left him, the previous afternoon. He was evidently fast approaching his end. His voice was sunken and husky—his breathing short and laboured—his strength diminished—his look wild and delirious. He talked incoherently, his words running upon all strange matters by turns, as I understood had been the case with him at times, through the whole night.

He had manifestly some lucid intervals. In one of them I attempted to converse with him, but he did not appear to regard me at all. I offered to pray with him, and he answered:—

“Prayer comes too late now—the harvest is past!” He immediately turned himself on the bed with a distressing shriek, and lay with his face towards the wall; and a moment afterwards his lips were vocal with delirious ravings! I may not here record what he said in his delirium; but it may be remarked, that his thoughts seemed to run much upon his father, in an unhappy manner.

I stayed in his room for a long time. When he seemed to have a lucid interval, I conversed with his mother and wife, hoping that he might attend to what was said, as he had apparently done the day before; but he did not seem to notice it.

I particularly noticed his manner towards those who were around him, as I had done the day before. When his mind was not wandering, he appeared the same as on the previous day. He would not speak to his father, but with great reluctance, and as if he detested him. He appeared unwilling to have him in his presence. He would follow him with his eye, as he came into the room or retired from it, with a look of hatred. Towards his mother, his manner was entirely different. He spake to her affectionately. He would gaze upon her for minutes together, with a look of tenderness and intense interest. If he saw her in tears, he would sometimes

strive to comfort her. He was manifestly affectionate towards his wife and his little brother. His eyes would rest upon *them* with a look of fondness, but fix upon his *father* with the look of a fiend.

After I had retired from his room for a few minutes, we returned again, and I found him sinking so fast, that I thought it my duty to tell his mother and his wife, that I did not believe he would live out the day. They seemed surprised, and immediately sent for the doctor. When he came he found him dead! He had survived about three hours after I left him, growing weaker and weaker, till he breathed his last, with the words of delirium upon his lips.

“ When the harvest is past, and the summer is gone,
And sermons and prayers shall be o’er :
When the beams cease to break, of the sweet Sabbath morn,
And Jesus invites thee no more ;
When the rich gales of mercy no longer shall blow,
The gospel no message declare ;—
Sinner, how canst thou bear the deep wallings of woe !
How suffer the night of despair ?

“ When the holy have gone to the regions of peace,
To dwell in the mansions above :
When their harmony wakes, in the fulness of bliss,
Their song to the Saviour they love ;—
Say, O sinner, that livest at rest and secure,
Who fearest no trouble to come,
Can thy spirit the swellings of sorrow endure ;
Or bear the impenitent’s doom !”

It does not belong to us to decide upon the condition of this departed man ;—but who would wish to die like him ? “ Let me die the death of the righteous ; let my last end be like his.”

I have no reason to suppose, that the religious character of that father was ever essentially altered. At the funeral of his son he appeared very much affected, and I hoped that his affliction and the serious exercises of that solemn and tender occasion would have an abiding and

salutary impression upon his mind. But when I visited him the next day, I found him occupied with the papers of his son, and the will which he had induced him to sign on the night before his death; and though his wife expostulated with him against such an employment at such a time, he still kept on. And afterwards till the day of his death, I never found any reason to believe that he ever became a different man.

But it was not so with that little brother, to whom the dying man gave such a solemn and affecting caution. The boy seemed to have treasured every word of it in *his heart*. He was very respectful and obedient to his father, in all things but one. In all that pertained to religion he was as fixed as a rock, against his father's influence. He would instantly leave him, if his father uttered a word on that subject. He would not be induced to neglect church or violate the Sabbath, by any influence or authority of his father. Without explanation or words of any sort, he would quietly disobey him, when he thought his requirements were contrary to the law of God; while in all other things he was most respectful and obedient towards him. I knew him well for years. His Bible and his mother were his counsellors; the Sabbath was his delight. He sought the Lord, and found him. And when giving me an account of the manner in which his mind had been influenced in respect to his salvation, he referred to what his dying brother had said to him. But he made this reference with evident reluctance and pain, weeping in bitterness of spirit. I have every reason to believe, that both he and the widow of his departed brother are the children of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

* This is so fearful a case, that I had some doubts about the propriety of inserting it. Yet it furnishes so impressive an instance of the dreadful result of a father's evil example, that it is here presented as a solemn warning.—Ed.

The Last Hour.

ONE of the most distressing instances of religious darkness and despondency, that I have ever been called to witness, was that of a poor girl, whom I first knew when I was called upon to visit her in her last sickness. She was not twenty years old, her health had departed, she seemed to be doomed to an early grave. A seated pulmonary affection deprived her of all hope of recovery, and she had no hope in God. From her earliest childhood she had had excellent religious instruction. Her parents were pious people, and though they were poor, they had carefully educated her. She had been a scholar in the Sabbath school from her childhood, under the weekly instructions of a teacher who loved her, and who had taught her with assiduity, kindness, and skill. But though she had been long the subject of religious impressions, and had carefully studied her Bible, and earnestly prayed to be directed into the path of life, she had never found peace with God.

When I first knew her, none but herself had any special fears that her life was near its end. She was then able to be about the house, and sometimes, in pleasant weather, to walk out into the fields. But she had given up all expectation that she should recover, and she now addressed herself to the work of preparation for death, to which she looked forward with an indescribable anguish. She regarded it as the commencement of eternal woe.

At first I felt no peculiar discouragement, on account of her religious depression. I regarded her fearful distress of mind, as only the natural accompaniment of a just conviction of sin, and confidently expected that she would soon be led to hope and peace in believing. But it was far otherwise with her. She attained no peace. As week

passed after week, she continued in the same despondency, receiving no light, no hope, no comfort. She read, she examined, she wept, she prayed in vain. And as her health declined more and more, her mind became wrought up to an intensity of anguish most distressful to witness. It was enough to melt any one's heart, to hear her cries for mercy. Never did a sinner plead more earnestly to be delivered from going down to perdition. She cried for mercy, as if standing in the very sight of hell! She had not a single gleam of light. Her soul was dark as a double midnight, and seemed plunged into an ocean of horrors. No one, I am sure, could have listened to her dreadful wailings, without feeling a sympathy with her, which would have wrung the heart with anguish.

I visited her often, conversed with her many times, taught her most carefully all the truths of the Bible, which I supposed could possibly have any tendency to awaken her faith in Christ, and prepare her to meet Him; but I never had any evidence to the last, that anything I ever said to her was the means of any benefit.

I wondered at her continued despair. It seemed to be the more remarkable, on account of the clear views which she appeared to have, of the character of God, of His holy law, of her condemnation by it, of her wicked heart, of redemption by Christ, and of the faithfulness of God to fulfil all his promises. I often examined her thoughts and feelings on all such points as well as I could, in order to detect any error into which she might have fallen, and which might be a hindrance to her faith and peace, and in order to persuade her to trust all her eternal interests to the grace of the great Redeemer. She had not a doubt about any of these truths. She knew and bewailed her guiltiness and depravity, she fully believed in the love of God towards sinners, and the willingness of Christ to save her, unworthy as she was; she said she hated sin with all her heart; she longed to be holy; she did not believe that she hated God, though she would not say that she loved Him; she admired "the kindness and love of God our Saviour" towards sinners; and wanted above all things,

to have an interest in His redemption, and be *sure* that He had accepted her.

Months before her death I believed that she was a child of God. I thought I could discover every evidence of it, except hope, and peace, and the spirit of adoption. She had now come to believe that she had some love to God; "but," says she, "I am afraid God does not love *me*, and will cast me off forever, as I deserve."

I strove, in every possible manner, and time after time, to lead her to the peace of faith. By holding directly before her mind the character of God, the redeeming kindness and work of Christ, and especially God's free invitations and firm promises; I strove to lead her to an appropriating faith, which should beguile her into a half-forgetfulness of herself, by causing her to delight in God. By teaching her according to the Scriptures what are the evidences of a new heart, and then by taking her own declarations to demonstrate to her that her own exercises of mind and heart were precisely these evidences; I laboured hard to induce her mind to rest upon the "witness within,"—a witness really there (as I believed,) if she would only hear and heed its voice. I explained to her what I honestly supposed to be the cause of her darkness, that is, her bodily condition, which prevented her seeing things as they were, by throwing a deceptive and dismal cloud over everything that pertained to herself. At times, when she appeared to me to be coming out of her gloom, and to be standing on the very borders of a light which she could not but see; a single recurring idea about herself would fling her back into all her darkness, and she would weep and wail in despair.

I had been describing heaven to her, and referring to its song of redemption, "who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."—

"Others will be in heaven," said she, "but *I* shall be cast out! From the distant region of my doom, I shall behold my companions by the river of life, happy, happy spirits, perhaps I shall hear their song; but no such home *for me!*"

"How came they there?" said I. "They were not saved by their goodness. They were no better than you. Jesus Christ saved them by his blood, and he offers to save you."

"He passes *me* by, Sir. He called them, and they obeyed the call in due time; but he does not call *me*!"

"*He does*, my child, *He does*. He calls you *now*, 'Come unto *ME*.'"

"If He does, Sir, I have no heart to hear Him! My day is past! my day is past! I shall be cast off as I deserve! Oh, I wish I had never been born!"

"Your day is *not* past! 'Now is the day of salvation.'"

Her only answer was tears and groans.

Such was her melancholy condition, as she declined more and more. Her strength was now almost gone. She evidently had but few weeks to live, if indeed a few days even remained to be measured by the falling sands of her life.

One day, (some weeks before her death,) after I had been stating to her the evidences of a regenerated state, and she had clearly described to me her own views and feelings, which seemed to me to accord with these evidences in one particular after another almost throughout the entire chapter; I said to her, with some earnestness,—

"Mary Ann, what do you want more, to convince you that you are a child of God? What do you expect? If these things do not convince you, what could? What evidence more do you *want*? Do you want an angel to come down from heaven here to your bedside, to tell you that you are a Christian, and shall go to heaven as soon as you die?"

"Oh, yes," said she, in a transport of emotion, clasping her death-pale hands, "*that is just what I want—just what I want.*"

"That is just what you cannot have," said I; "God is not going to give you any such *kind* of evidence."

I then explained to her, how she must rest upon spirit-

ual evidences, as all Christians do, and not on any evidences of the senses, or supernatural occurrence outside of her own heart.

As she approached fast her end, and evidently could not survive much longer; I was greatly disappointed and saddened, that her mind continued in the same unbroken gloom. I had not expected it. I had looked for a different experience. But it now seemed that her sun must go down in clouds!

One Sabbath morning, just before the time of public service, I was sent for to "see her die." She could still speak, in a very clear and intelligible manner, better than for weeks before. Her reason was continued to her, all her faculties appeared as unimpaired and bright as ever. All that I could discover of any alteration in her mind, appeared to me to consist simply in this,—she now thought of *herself* less, and of her God and Saviour more. I told her, as I was requested to do, that she was now very soon to die. The bell was tolling for me to go to the pulpit, and, having prayed with her, commending her to her God, I gave her my hand to bid her farewell. "Will you come to see me at noon?" says she.

"My dear child, you cannot live till noon. The doctor says you cannot live half an hour. I will come here as soon as I leave the church."

I went to the church and preached; and as soon as the service closed, I went immediately to her house. She was still alive. One of her friends met me at the door, and hastily told me, that soon after I left the house, an hour and a half before, she avowed her perfect trust in Christ, and her firm confidence that he would "take her home to heaven." "I am full of peace," said she, "I can trust my God. This is enough. I am happy, happy. I die happy." A little while after, she said she wanted to see me "once more." She was told I was in church, and that she could not live till the sermon was closed. "*I shall live*," said she firmly. She seemed to refuse to die. She enquired what time the service would close, and being told, she often afterwards inquired what time it was.

She watched the hands of the clock, frequently turning her eyes upon them, in the intervals between her prayers and praises and rapturous thanksgivings. As I entered the room she turned her eyes upon me; "Oh," says she, "I am glad you have come; I have been waiting for you. I wanted to see you once more, and tell you how happy I am. I have found out that a poor sinner has *nothing* to do only to believe. I am not afraid of death now. I am willing to die. God has forgiven me, and I die happy,—I am very happy. I wanted to tell you this. I thought I should live long enough to tell you. I thought God would not let me die till I had seen you, and told you of my joy, so as not to have you discouraged when you meet with other persons who have such dark minds as mine was. Tell them to *seek* the Saviour. Light will come some time, if it is at the last hour. I *prayed* God to let me see you once more. He has granted my last prayer; and now,—now I am ready."

Her voice faltered; she could say no more. I *prayed* some two or three minutes by her bedside; we rose from our knees, and in less than five minutes more she was dead. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

It was pleasant to hear this dying girl affirm her faith, and to witness her joy at the moment of death. But I do not know that this joy amounted to any more real evidence of her effectual calling to Christ by the Holy Spirit than she had presented before. Faith is one thing, and feeling is another. It is the faith that saves. It is the feeling that comforts. But the faith may exist where the feeling is wanting. The principle may exist where its action is wanting.

If this poor girl had died in all her darkness and fears, I should not have despaired of her. Amid all her glooms of guilt, I thought she exhibited proofs of faith. It seemed to me that it was faith which made her attend to the truths of the Bible, with such careful scrutiny and en-

during perseverance, at the very moment when she saw no light in it for *her*;—that it was faith, which made her pray so fervently and without faltering, month after month, at the very time when she did not suppose she received any answer;—that it was faith, which kept her, in her most gloomy times, perfectly free from any besetting doubt that there *is* salvation for sinners in Jesus Christ, freely offered to them in the love of God; that it was faith, which made her so perfectly assured that peace with God is attainable, and made her long for it as the only thing she cared for; yea, that it was faith, which gave to her very glooms their most terrible aspect, creating such a confident and continued conviction that if Christ was not found, every thing was lost. Her grief was not that of an alien and an enemy, but that of an affectionate, but disinherited child. The very point of her anguish consisted in this,—namely, that she believed Christ to be a full and free Saviour, and yet could find no evidence in her heart that she trusted in Him. The promises were precious things in her heart's estimation, but they seemed to her to be precious things which she did not embrace. She distrusted herself, but not God. She was afraid to believe that she was a believer. She was so tremblingly afraid of getting wrong, that she dared not think she could possibly be right. On this ground, I was led to believe that Mary Ann was a child of God, long before that memorable light shone on her soul in the hour of death. She was in darkness, not because she had no faith, but because she did not believe she had any. She had a title to heaven, without having eyes to read it.

Her mother, father, and physician (who was a pious man), all her friends, as I suppose, regarded this bright close of her earthly experience very differently from myself. They appeared to look upon it as the commencement of her faith, thinking that God had first appeared for her in that time of her first triumph and joy. Such an idea in similar cases, I suppose to be common, and I suppose it to be an error, and a very misleading one, especially to many unconverted sinners. Such unconverted sinners hear

of instances like this, and, therefore, *hope* that it may be just so with themselves, when they shall be called to die. On the ground of this hope, they speak a deceitful peace to their own hearts, without any definite, determined, and prayerful efforts to prepare for death,—just leaving it to that coming hour itself to bring along with it the preparation they need. Their secret thought is,—such a one, who always *lived* without religion, died in peace at last, and why should not I? Delusive thought, and often fatal! These persons never stop to inquire what had been the previous heart-history, the struggles, and prayers of those, whose peaceful death they mention. They themselves are not *living such a life* as their now departed acquaintance did, who died in peace; and, therefore, they have no good reason to think they shall *die such a death*. Too hastily they say of such a one, “he lived all his life without religion.” They say what they do *not* know, and what probably is *false*. If any one would hope to *die* like Mary Ann, let him *live* like Mary Ann. Her supreme aim, and her agonizing prayer for months, sought the favour of God. To gain this, she omitted nothing which she deemed a duty,—she deferred nothing to a future hour. To gain this was all her desire, and no discouragement could make her falter, or turn her aside. “Go thou and do likewise,” if thou wouldst *die* like Mary Ann.*

* That a person who dies in a state of despair, where there is physical disease, as in the case of the poet Cowper, may be saved, there can be no question; but it is a somewhat hazardous position to affirm, that a person of sound mind can be saved in despair. For is it not saying that a person can be saved without faith? Will conviction of sin, however deep, distress, however pungent, save without faith? Till we believe that God *will* have mercy upon us if we trust in him, do we not make God a liar? Perhaps the author judged rightly as well as charitably in this case; but we should be cautious how we connect, in other cases, safety with despair.—Ed.

The Dawn of Heaven.

SIXTEEN years after the death of Mary Ann (mentioned in the preceding sketch), I was summoned to the sick-bed of her sister. She was a younger sister, whom I had never seen since she was a mere child, and of whose religious character I had no knowledge. She had married; and after many trying changes, she was now in the city of New York. A kind lady, one of my own friends who resided in that city, and who had formerly known something of her family in another State, had accidentally heard of her illness, had called upon her, and now did me the favour to bring me the sick woman's request, that I "would go and see her." She told me I should find her in a very destitute condition, very much unbefriended and alone, though she had herself done something for her, to make her a little more comfortable. I received this message in the evening, and early the next morning I made my way to the house, to which she had directed me.

I found the sick woman in a boarding-house, among strangers, where nobody knew her except her husband, and manifestly nobody cared for her. She was in the garret, in a little room close under the roof of the house. The scanty furniture and the whole appearance of the room, showed me, at a glance, how unenviable was her condition. There was but one chair in the room, and this was used for a table (the only one she had), on which were placed some vials of medicine, a tea-cup and a saucer, which constituted all the furniture of the room, except her humble bed. But all was neat and clean. If there was scantiness, there was decency.

As I entered the room, I perceived at once her hopeless

condition. She was emaciated, pale, tormented with a hollow cough, unable to speak but in a whisper, and her cheek was flushed with that round spot of peculiar red, with which I had become too familiar to mistake it for anything else than the fatal signal. I approached the bed on which she was lying, told her who I was, and offered her my hand.

"I am *very* happy—to see you," said she (speaking with effort and only in a whisper, and compelled to pause at almost every word). "I did not suppose—you would remember me—at all,—and for a long time—I could not have courage—to send—for you,—or—let you know—that I was here. But I remembered—you visited—my sister,—Mary Ann,—when *she* died,—and I had—a great desire to—see you.

"I am very glad," said I, "to be able to see you; but I am sorry to find you so ill. I wish I had known that you were here, sooner."

"You are—very kind, Sir; but I was—afraid to trouble you. I have—not seen you—before,—since I was—a little child:—and I supposed—you had—forgotten, that—there was such a person. I am very thankful to you—for being so kind—as to come to see me."

"Have you been sick long?"

"Yes, Sir,—a good many—months. I have lately—been growing—much worse,—and I want now—to get home—to my mother,—this week,—if I can. I think—I should be better there—for a little while,—though I cannot tell."

"Do you think you are well enough to go home?"

"I hope—I could go—in the boat—and live to get there. The—hottest of the summer—is coming on soon—and our place here—is very uncomfortable; but—most of all—I want to see,—my *mother*,—*once* more before I die." And the big tears rolled fast over her fevered cheeks.

"I hope," said I, "you may be able to see her; but you do not seem to have much strength just now."

"Indeed, Sir,—my strength—is—all gone. I cannot—stand on my feet—any longer. Before I became—so weak—I used to work with my needle—and help my husband—earn something ;—and then, we had—a more comfortable place. But I can do nothing—now—and so we came—to this—garret—to save rent."

"Have you much pain?"

"Yes Sir—I am in—great pain now,—the most—of the time."

"Do you expect ever to get well?"

"Oh, no Sir,—I shall—never get well. I know I am—to die—before long ;—the consumption—is—a hopeless disease. This painful cough—will soon end—my days."

"Are you afraid to die?"

"Oh, no Sir," said she with a smile, "Jesus—is my hope. He—*will* save me."

"Trust Him," said I, "you trust eternal rock. He has promised,"—

Interrupting me, she replied,—

"What *can*—anybody want—more than the *promises*? It seems to me—the promises—are enough—for everybody ;—*so sweet*—they are so *full*. Why, God—has promised—to make—an everlasting covenant—with us—poor sinners!" And tears of joy coursed down her smiling face.

I conversed with her as long as I thought it best for her. All her conversation was in the same happy strain. She appeared very much exhausted, and I had little hope that her desire to "see her *mother once* more," would ever be gratified. Indeed I did not think she would live till sun-set. I prayed with her, and promising to call again in the afternoon, I left her.

Some little arrangements were made for her comfort, and in the afternoon I called there again. She was evidently worse, but her joy was full. Said she,—

"I bless my God—for all my pain—for the disappointments—of my past life,—and the strange—strange way—in which—he has—led me on. I have had trials—many

trials. My husband—did not prosper—as—he hoped—to do,—and sometimes—we have been—in distress. But—my trials have—done me good. Now we have few wants. You know I cannot—eat anything now,—and I hope—his wages—will keep him—from suffering. I came—to this—little room—when I—could not work—any longer,—on purpose to relieve him. The rent—is cheaper—here—in this—little garret,—and I want to be—as little burdensome—to him—as possible. I used to think—when I first made a profession—of religion—trials would—overcome me;—but God makes me happy—in them. I find—if one—is not worldly—trials are easy—to bear;—and if—we look towards God—and heaven—they are—nothing at all—but mercies.”

“And does your husband feel as you do? Is he a pious man?”

She turned her languid head upon her pillow, glancing around the room, to see if the nurse who had been procured for her, had left the room, and perceiving she was not there, said she,—

“I suppose—I may speak—freely—to you—about my husband,—since—we are alone. He is not—religious,—and that is the trouble—of my heart.”

She could say no more: she wept and sobbed aloud. After a little time, becoming more composed, evidently struggling to suppress her emotions, she continued,—

“I must leave that—I can’t—speak—of *him*. Oh, it seems to me—as if the careless, who neglect—salvation,—have never—read—God’s promises. If they had—and knew,—what they meant—they could not—help trusting—them. I am happier now—than ever—I was before. It is sweet to—suffer—this pain,—when Christ—puts such delights—into my soul.”

She was now stronger than I had expected to find her. I prayed with her, and promising to see her again the next day, I left her.

I was prevented from calling to see her the next morning, as I had intended; and when I called in the afternoon,

I perceived her end was very fast approaching. Her countenance was changed, her pulse more feeble and fluttering, her voice was now perfectly restored, and she could speak with strong, clear articulation. She mentioned her recovered voice as an instance of God's goodness to her, and both she and her husband took it as an evidence that she might live to reach her home. To me it was only an evidence to the contrary. She did not appear to be at all aware how near she was to death, and still entertained the hope of starting the next day, "to go home to her mother." I felt very reluctant to crush that hope; but I thought she ought to be made acquainted with the prospect before her. She was still very weak and in some pain, and when I mentioned her sufferings to her, and expressed my sorrow that she had so much to endure; her face lighted up with a glad smile: said she,—

"Oh, it is *pleasant* to suffer, when we know it is *our God* that brings us to it. He does not afflict me too much. My poor body is weak and almost gone; but my God fills me with the delights of his love. My heart is full of joy. I am perfectly happy. I shall soon be where Christ is, and love Him forever."

"I suppose," said I, "you are aware that you cannot now last but a little while; and are prepared to go, at any moment when God bids."

"I have no desire, Sir, to get well. Why should I have? There is nothing in this world for me. You see we have nothing. I have parted with all my little furniture and my clothes, to get bread and pay our debts; and I don't want the world; it is nothing to me now, and I leave it willingly. I am happy. God makes me happy. Christ is enough for me. I love to trust God's promises. I trust Him for all I want, and He makes me very happy. Death seems like nothing to me. It is my friend. I welcome it. Dying is only a step, and then I shall be at home, at home;" and tears of joy coursed down her smiling face. The last word—*home*, which she had uttered, seemed to remind her of her earthly home, and she added,—

"To-morrow, I hope to go home to my *mother*, and see her and all my other friends once more; *perhaps* I may."

"I am afraid not, my dear friend. You are very low, and I wish you to be ready to die at any moment."

Turning her death-glazed eyes upon me, she asked,—

"Shall I die *to-night*? If you think so, *tell me plainly*. Don't weep so for me. I thank you for all your kind sympathy; but I am perfectly happy. God fulfils to me all His promises. I leave all in His hands—gladly, joyfully. But I think I can live to get home. *You* think I shall die to-night. I thank you for letting me know it; and I am *ready* if God calls. But if I am alive, may I see you in the morning? God will reward you, I know, for all your kindness to me."

"Yes, my child; you may expect me here in the morning; but if you have anything you wish to say to me, you had better say it now."

"I have no more to say, but to thank you again. Your kind words have done me great good; and it has been sweet to me, *very* sweet, to join with you in prayer. Help me to praise God for the delights that fill my soul. Don't weep so for me."

I prayed with her, and praised God as she desired, and then bade her *farewell*. "Do not think I weep because I am sorry," said she, "I weep because I am overcome with joy. Delights fill my happy soul. This is the dawn of heaven. My heaven is begun. Dying is sweet to me. I go to my blessed Lord. I thank you for coming to me. Farewell, farewell."

Early the next morning I returned to that privileged garret. It was empty! Even her corpse was not there! She had died about four hours after I left her; her body had been placed in its coffin, conveyed on board the vessel, and on the very day in which she expected to see her "*mother once more*," her mother received the lifeless corpse of her child.

It now lies buried in the grave-yard of her native valley. She and Mary Ann sleep side and side. And they shall

rise together from the dead, in that coming day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

If grace is there, how instructive, how glorious is

THE DEATH BED OF THE POOR.

"Tread softly—bow the head—
In reverent silence bow;
No passing bell doth toll—
Yet an immortal soul
Is passing now.

"Stranger! however great,
With lowly reverence bow;
There's one in that poor shed—
One on that paltry bed—
Greater than thou.

"Beneath that beggar's roof,
Lo! Death doth keep his state;
Enter—no crowd attend:
Enter—no guards defend
This palace gate.

"That pavement, damp and cold,
No smiling courtiers tread;
One silent woman stands—
Lifting with meagre hands
A dying head.

"No mingling voices sound—
An infant wail alone;
A sob suppressed—again
That short, deep gasp, and then
The parting groan.

"Oh! change—Oh wondrous change—
Burst are the prison bars;
This moment *there*, so low,
So agonized, and now
Beyond the stars.

"Oh! change—stupendous change!
There lies the soulless clod;
The sun eternal breaks—
The new immortal wakes—
Wakes with his God."

AND now may the Eternal Spirit, the source of all light and grace, deign to bless the perusal of this instructive and interesting volume, so that many anxious inquirers after salvation, who are struggling amidst the perplexities and sorrows of a soul convinced of sin, and unrelieved by faith, may be led without delay to trust in Christ, and to find peace. And may the ministers of religion, and others, who have to deal with such cases, learn from these illustrative pages, the divine art of healing the wounded spirit and binding up the broken in heart. *Amen.*—ED.

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